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University of Durham  
Faculty of Arts  
Department of Theology

**Studies in the doctrine and worship of the Church of  
England (1976-2000)**

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St. John's College  
September 2002  
M.A. in Theological Research  
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The aim of this MA Thesis is to provide a research in the Church of England doctrine and worship from the 1970s till almost the present day. In order to meet its aims, the research is largely based on the analysis of the Reports of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, from “Christian Believing” (1976) till “The Mystery of Salvation” (1995). Analysis of the background of the Reports is also provided, as well as a general evaluation of the role these Reports play in the life of the Church of England.

The main intention of this thesis is to follow two major themes, expressed in a variety of ways: the topic of Trinitarian theology and the issue of corporate consciousness in the Church of England. Trinitarian theology is mostly dealt with in Chapter 3, which analyses the texts engaging with doctrinal questions in an explicit way and aims at demonstrating that the Church of England holds firmly to a Trinitarian theology as the doctrinal basis for its descriptive theology, spirituality and praxis. The issue of corporate consciousness and analysis of worship and liturgy are tackled in Chapter 4.

Historically the identity of the Church of England was defined by the claim that its doctrine is to be found in the liturgy. Nowadays when the Anglican worship does not follow a single uniform pattern, such an approach cannot be regarded as viable. The thesis aims at answering this issue by the holistic approach to the studies of the doctrine and worship in the Church of England, when both strands are considered together. Although done from an ‘outsider’ point of view, the research claims to be comprehensive in its scope and provides a number of reflections and practical recommendations as the Church of England enters the 21<sup>st</sup> century.



# Studies in the doctrine and worship of the Church of England (1976-2000).

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# 1. Introduction.

This MA is the result of one year of studies in Church of England modern beliefs and practice. Its aim is to provide a study in the Church of England doctrine and worship from the 1970s till almost the present day.

The starting date for the research was chosen for two major reasons. First of all, this was the time when radical theology in Britain reached its climax and when many prominent Anglican theologians found it possible to deny some beliefs which are considered as being essential for Christianity (the Incarnation being only one example). The Church of England had to face this crisis of confidence and restate its doctrinal position. So the second reason is that from the year 1976, when "Christian Believing" was published, the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England has been engaged in the long-term process of formulating the position of the Church of England on the matters of doctrine. As the research tackles the actual contents of the theology of the Church of England in the stated period of time, the thesis itself explicitly aims at providing the positive answer to the much-discussed question if there is such a phenomenon as specifically Anglican (and more precisely, Church of England) theology.

As the subject of the research, having been formulated in such a way, is far too broad for the format requested for an MA degree and as there is an evident danger of the research being perhaps too shallow in its quality, if not in its scope, the following objectives were chosen. First of all, to single out texts or documents, which can be considered as comprehensive and appropriate in order to present the position of the whole Church of England. That is why the research is based on the analysis of the Reports of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, which meet these criteria. Secondly, it is necessary to analyse, though not always in a great detail, the background of these Reports and their place in the given philosophical, theological and polemical milieu. It is important to identify the polemical stance of the Reports as well (the last Report "The Mystery of Salvation" is therefore merely referred to as its polemical content is not as sharp). In order to assess them adequately, first I discuss those challenges that the Church of England met and to which the Reports were the response.



Thus for instance, it is virtually impossible to provide an overall evaluation of “Christian Believing”, the first Report after the Doctrinal Commission was reassembled, without knowledge of the intellectual atmosphere and the issues which were predominant in Great Britain in the 1970s.

So the methodology is to do research on the background of the Reports before turning to the textual analysis itself. In order to place the Reports and their recommendations into a broader context of the life of the Church of England, necessary references are provided when it is appropriate. This is also done in order to avoid possible criticisms of putting too much stress on a limited number of texts, which are not necessarily familiar to all adherents of the Church of England, clergy and laity alike. It should be noted that the research in the contemporary Church of England is a new subject area for me, and most of the descriptive material is based on a number of secondary sources, which are to be found in the Bibliography<sup>1</sup>.

Also I did not include in the thesis a detailed analysis of those debates and reviews that the Reports of the Doctrine Commission provoked (see the Bibliography, pp.131, 134). I considered them carefully during the work on the thesis, but the word limit allowed me to provide the textual analysis of the Reports only, which I regarded as my main target.

The driving force of this thesis is the attempt to follow two major themes, expressed in a variety of ways: the topic of Trinitarian theology and the issue of corporate consciousness in the Church of England.

Those two themes are constantly intertwined and can be separated for the sake of academic precision only. Still, two main foci can be named. Trinitarian theology is mostly dealt with in Chapter 3, which analyses the texts engaging with doctrinal questions in an explicit way (“The Myth of God Incarnate” and its debate, “We Believe in God”, “We Believe in the Holy Spirit”). Chapter 3 aims at demonstrating that the Church of England holds firmly to a Trinitarian theology as the doctrinal basis for its descriptive theology, spirituality and praxis.

The issue of corporate consciousness (as opposed to the individual one) falls into two main trends: the theme of common prayer in the Church of England and the

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<sup>1</sup> The sources I have used for setting the scene of the research include Furlong, Monica *C of E. The State It's In* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 2000); Hastings, Adrian *A History of English Christianity 1920 – 1985* (London: Collins, 1986), and Hylson-Smith, Kenneth *The Churches in England from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II, Vol. III 1833 – 1998* (London: SCM Press, 1998).

issue of corporate activity. That is why it naturally leads to the analysis of worship and liturgy on a more practical, at times even grassroots level. Both aspects are tackled in Chapter 4, which also contains a significant section dealing with the process of liturgical revision in the Church of England.

This thesis argues that it is necessary to turn to the analysis of the worship of the Church of England and the main reason for this is precisely the specific character of the Church of England, that even its official doctrine is to be found in documents of a liturgical nature: the Book of Common Prayer and the Ordinal (the third source – the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion – being bound under the same cover).

As the background of the author is not Church of England, and not even Anglican, great care was exercised to make the research comprehensive and to escape purely evaluative statements as often as it was possible.

The author eagerly admits that most credit for this MA thesis should go to my supervisors, Prof. Stephen Sykes, Dr Alan Bartlett and Dr Colin Crowder, the latter two having agreed to supervise my project during Prof. Sykes' sabbatical leave. Their advice and support made this thesis come to its realisation and accomplishment.

I want to thank here also Karen Graham, CMS Area Coordinator for North-East England, who arranged for me the opportunity to visit many parishes in the dioceses of Durham and Newcastle and to interview many Anglican clergy on those 'field studies' visits. Without this practical experience of the Church of England the research would never have taken its present form either. Karen was both intellectually challenging and very supportive, which contributed to the development of my personal knowledge and appreciation of Anglicanism and Anglicans.



## **2. The Challenge of *Christian Believing*.**

The Report by The Doctrine Commission of the Church of England “Christian Believing” published in 1976 is a document of considerable significance as it not only reveals the opinion of the Church of England on such a basic subject as the nature of the Christian faith but it also indicates that this topic provoked a divergence in the standpoints of the leading theologians which was hardly to be ignored. The full title of the Report reads as follows: “Christian Believing. The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds”.

The sheer fact of the publishing of the detailed examination of the nature of Christian faith makes us aware of the circumstances that took place in the 1970s in British theology. It was a decade of reassessment of the essentials of faith and the question was raised whether Christian tradition was still fulfilling its task adequately of teaching people about God and their own place in relation to God and within the world. Before turning to the analysis of the Report, it seems to be appropriate to give an account of the book by the Chairman of the Doctrine Commission, the eminent patristic scholar, Professor Maurice Wiles “The Remaking of Christian Doctrine” (1974), which appeared only two years earlier. Several reasons for doing this can be provided. First of all, the reader’s attention is immediately drawn by the controversial title of the book. The word ‘remaking’ can mean either reformulating traditional Christian formulae in order to draw them nearer to a modern reader (a kind of catechumenal course in a very broad sense), or a more radical undertaking, the task of denying what has been previously essential to Christianity by providing another paradigm of theological discourse, which nonetheless still claims to be Christian. Secondly, the book is in fact a publication of the 1973 Hulsean Lectures in the University of Cambridge and as such was aimed to provide a coherent picture of Christian doctrine and a necessary part of the first year theology students’ curriculum. Maurice Wiles at that time held the position of the Regius Professor of Divinity in Oxford and had already been made the Chair of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England. Such a high rank presupposes that his theological position was highly acclaimed and respected. Wiles was certainly aware of the fact that his book would have been noticed and widely discussed partly because of his leading position in the Church of England, partly because of the controversial character of his theological enterprise. Finally, “The Remaking of Christian Doctrine”

can help us to examine in a greater detail Wiles's own position in the forthcoming Report.

### **a) *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* by M.Wiles.**

First of all, Wiles claimed that it is our own understanding of the Christian faith that is subject to change because we are living in a rapidly changing world and our point of view surely is different from that of the first Christians. All the variety of historical, cultural and philosophical conditions and changes makes one admit that the understanding and expression of the Christian faith should undergo changes as well. This issue has always been evident for Christians and both the Ecumenical Councils of the first centuries of the Christian era and European Reformations in the late Middle Ages witness to this fact. History may tell us that it is different stress either on preserving the tradition or revolutionary changes in doctrine that often mattered. In Wiles' case, the stress is on reconsidering what is regarded to be the essentials of Christian faith (mostly, the doctrine of incarnation), down to the language itself that systematic theology uses. Such a position inevitably leads to recognition that there is some 'past' tradition and 'new' situation which is in need of another ground for theological affirmations. The biblical material, the history of the church and contemporary experience are considered to be both the starting points and also the cornerstones for theological construction, and it sounds quite consistent with the mainstream Anglican position. What is radically new is that Wiles claims that we cannot simply deduce our theology on the basis of the traditional one, a modern approach cannot use the principle of historical inheritance: 'we cannot lay down any rules about the relation of contemporary doctrine to the affirmations of the past which will not be so general as to offer no practical guidance at all'<sup>1</sup>. If we look attentively at this statement, we come to the conclusion that the task the theologian is about to undertake is of immense difficulty: it is an attempt to formulate the basis of Christian faith, as if there were no reliable tradition of talking about God. Formulated in such a way, the task becomes literally impossible because Christianity as the religion of God's revelation is grounded in the unique phenomenon of God's disclosure to people. So the author chooses another way of carrying on with his project - the question of faith

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<sup>1</sup> Maurice Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine* (London: SCM Press, 1974), 14.

remains and takes a very acute and general form: 'What ought one to believe about God and his revelation to the world in the areas of central importance of Christian faith?'<sup>2</sup>

Wiles starts with affirmation that the nature of God always will remain hidden from us (a point so strongly made by the Cappodocian fathers), even though God actually revealed himself through his Word and in person through his only son, Jesus Christ Our Lord. This revelation is sufficient for our salvation but it is not sufficient for claiming that in the Scriptures we obtain complete and final knowledge about God. Wiles goes as far as to claim that theology should quit speaking about God at all, concentrating exclusively on human experience of God acting in the world<sup>3</sup>. The problem raised is the fundamental one for Christianity and Wiles is within his right to say that no limited human knowledge can embrace divine glory and mystery. But the God of Christianity is nothing like the *Dinge-An-Sich* of Kant's idealism; he is active in the world and lives of his people. The best confirmation of it is that Wiles himself goes on speaking about God as a creator and sustainer of the world and as the reality above and behind the world we know that gives reality sense and meaning. Very close to Tillich, Wiles regards God as the ultimate source of existence. But God is not detached from the creation as in Deism; he was active in person through Jesus Christ and is still active by his Holy Spirit. So, Wiles turns to considering Christology in its traditional expression and dedicates to it two chapters "The Person of Christ" and "The Work of Christ".

The author argues that as there are a variety of approaches to what can be a starting point for Christian doctrine and as the peculiar understanding of Jesus Christ as Son of God should be based on some initial belief in God, he can choose the option to start with some general theistic belief or with belief in Jesus Christ. And Wiles proceeds to argue that belief in Christ as both God and man cannot serve as an unquestionable axiom for his survey. There are a number of major difficulties that Wiles encounters while speaking about the figure of Jesus Christ: first of all, the difficulty of obtaining firm historical knowledge and secondly, this historically oriented consciousness 'makes it extremely difficult (I am tempted to say impossible, but that would be to prejudge the issue) to ascribe absolute authority to any particular occasion or to any particular set of

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<sup>2</sup> Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, 83.

<sup>3</sup> Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, 25: "Perhaps theology must after all abandon its claim to speak about the transcendent God... in the sense that it will speak only of the effects of God as experienced, and make no attempt to speak of God in himself."



experiences within the world'<sup>4</sup>. Thus, the life and death of Jesus Christ cannot maintain absolute authority for Christians of all times. Here there is evident a very strong move to avoid saying anything about God in himself and to speak only about the life of believers as determined and dramatically changed by Jesus Christ. What then can be said about Jesus Christ? The author actually appeals to Church tradition to give the answer to this question. One can either escape historical argument by turning to the whole 'Christ event' and laying primary importance on the witnesses of the apostles, or turn to the Church's understanding of Christ during its history of twenty centuries. Both approaches provide a rich set of the Christian experience and thus in a very implicit way Wiles attempts to argue that Christ is not unique (but again, one has to be very careful to distinguish between Jesus Christ himself, who remains an enigma, and experiences of Christ that can be the same for people of different times and cultures). No wonder that using this approach the theologian faces great difficulty in trying to say something about the doctrine of unique incarnation and prefers to put it aside, acknowledging the difficulty of fitting it into his way of thinking. The doctrine of incarnation proclaims the historical uniqueness of Christ's birth, life and ministry, and of his death, whereas the doctrine of atonement aims at the fact that Christ's death saved not only his contemporaries, but all humankind once and for all. Wiles has to admit that the revelation in Christ was in many ways special and cannot be either repeated or overcome; it is both the utmost outpouring of God's love for humankind and an insight into the intratrinitarian relationships: 'Christ's passion is in some way a demonstration of what is true of God's eternal nature' and 'has been remarkably effective as a historical phenomenon in the transformation of human lives'<sup>5</sup>. So, both historical phenomenon and its eternal representative character seem inseparable and equally necessary to maintain. This balance is most effectively managed in the experience of the sacramental, where historical references to issues concerning Jesus Christ meet basic anthropological contents and experience shared by everyone.

That appeal to the witness of the sacraments leads us to the doctrine of the Holy Spirit as it is presented by Wiles. Akin to the manner of how Christology and the work of Christ were presented by the theologian, the Holy Spirit is seen in unity with God's grace in the world. Instead of looking for miracles or some supernatural powers in order to affirm God's constant activity, Wiles claims that all the particular occasions where

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<sup>4</sup> Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, 45.

<sup>5</sup> Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, 79–80.

the Holy Spirit reveals himself are a kind of reminder of divine love and creativity and actually he defines such occasions as 'places where the purpose of God has been apprehended, expressed or put into effect in a particularly profound way'<sup>6</sup>. From such a perspective, the scenes of the Spirit's activity become expressions of God's love and his providence.

The trend pursued by the author throughout the whole book is quite clear – it is an attempt to reformulate traditional Christian doctrine in a purely theistic idiom. What Christians have attributed to the person and work of Jesus Christ, Wiles seeks to attribute to God. Godhead remains personal, but the second and the third persons of the Holy Trinity lose the basis of their personal and distinctive existence and become attributes of God (hence, subordinate to God the Father). The God of Wiles still remains the ground of the world's very existence; he still cares about the suffering of his people; he still provides meaning to the world and people's lives and as a personal being he longs for their personal commitment. To answer this divine call is to fulfil the task of human life, but it is quite remarkable that the author does not claim that this is enough for salvation and entering the new life. Whereas Christians have been always firm in their proclamation that it is the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and Christ's resurrection from the dead and ascension to his Father which are the steadfast ground for faith and for the covenant between God and a man, Wiles claims to offer a 'non-incarnational' theology, where the doctrine of incarnation 'is not required for the whole pattern of belief to be true, or indeed for our having good grounds for believing it to be true'<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, what Wiles proposes is a kind of a theistic belief which tries to take into account traditional Christian beliefs in God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit but actually brings all three persons together to form one Godhead, active in the world and known in our experience, but absolutely transcendent so nothing can be stated about his nature per se. It appears that all Christian theology is a record of human experience of God and its latest interpretation in the form of doctrines. Even while focusing on this experience, the theologian does not define clearly its definitive traits or character and does not explain how such experience and its interpretation can form the life attitude and faith either. And one further question was not answered: why it is particularly Christian. In this case one can ask if there is a remaking of the Christian doctrine or its

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<sup>6</sup> Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, 102.

<sup>7</sup> Wiles, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, 118.

actual 'unmaking'. Wiles' project is certainly radical, although he is at pains to claim it to be an authentically Christian doctrine, but it leaves the reader with the idea that it is not coherent in the attempt to be consistent with the traditional Christian standpoint.

What seems useful to mention here as well, is that Wiles, in the final chapter of his book which is called "Final Reflections", gives an account of the modern cognitive changes that inevitably determined his theological discourse: he mentions that the approaches to knowledge have become more empirical nowadays and that the attitude to the role of authority and understanding of the accessibility of the past have changed considerably. And he also puts to the forefront Christian experience and the necessity of its being adequately interpreted by a doctrinal construal. All these points are of significant interest, because all of them became evident (explicitly or not) in "Christian Believing" as well.

### ***b) Christian Believing (1976).***

The main title of the Report by The Doctrine Commission "Christian Believing" refers to the faith of an individual believer, taken in a very broad sense. The subtitle "The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds" claims to investigate the nature, and essentials of Christian believing and the forms in which it is represented in the history of dogma. There is no attempt to examine the content of faith in a great detail or to build up a coherent bulk of a doctrine. In Don Cupitt's words, this Report is an exercise of a metatheology where the question is posed 'What is faith, subjective and objective, and what are its norms?'<sup>8</sup> At the same time as it is impossible to examine form and contents separately in any philosophical discourse, the notion of Christian believing was analyzed in the Report by means of turning to the Scripture and creeds, being the normative sources.

If one turns to the structure of the Report, the following trend is to be observed. The Report consists of three parts: first, there is a joint report, which is followed by two appendices – one describes the unity and pluriformity of the New Testament and the other gives an historical account of the origins of the creeds – and finally, the third and most lengthy part is made up of eight essays by the members of the Commission. It is indicated both in the foreword by the Archbishop of Canterbury and in the preface that it was a work of devoted toil to reach a certain degree of unanimity, finally expressed in

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<sup>8</sup> review on *Christian Believing* by Don Cupitt in *Theology* 79, No 667 (1976), 109.

the joint report. The members of the Commission represented a wide spectrum of theological positions within the Church of England, and although they reached a certain degree of agreement on general approach, they found themselves obliged to express their own viewpoints on the raised issues in the form of essays.

Partly such a situation is due to the subject itself. The nature of the Christian faith is a fundamental notion for every Christian and there is a constant need to examine strictly and thoroughly if the image of God we possess is a true one and not a product of merely human inventiveness. It is a noble task to undertake, but not an easy one; and there is always a tension between those who cherish the tradition in which they received the faith to such an extent, that they refuse to take into account any possible alterations, and those who are eager to launch a more radical enterprise of theological reassessment of the contemporary form of Christian faith and its expression. So the joint report aimed at achieving a fragile balance between the conservative and a fairly radical party, although it could not escape all the tensions of such an approach.

The members of the Commission stated that before exploring Christian faith and its means of expression, it was necessary to take into account the following issues: the matter of modern attitudes to the past; the issue of the religious language, its specific nature and functions; finally, the contemporary usage and comprehending of the Bible and the creeds. Some of those presuppositions have already been mentioned while discussing the final chapter of "The Remaking of the Christian Doctrine" by Maurice Wiles.

According to the issues raised, the Commission defines the aims of the Report. 'First, to describe as honestly and accurately as we can some of the main difficulties which arise for Christians in this field at the present time, and to say why they arise. Secondly, to bring into awareness of Christians ... that divergences in the way belief is expressed conceptually are to be expected from the very nature of Christian truth itself... Thirdly, to show that underlying even very widely differing presentations of Christian faith there is in fact a common pattern or method of thinking...'<sup>9</sup> As far as the last target is concerned, the Report especially stresses that there is an acute need nowadays for Christians not to force themselves to admit some artificial agreements, but to operate within a given pattern using all the resources available.

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<sup>9</sup> Church of England, Doctrine Commission, *Christian Believing. The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds*, (London: SPCK, 1976), 5.



Our attitude to Christian belief as handed down in course of the tradition is strongly linked with the attitude towards the past. The chapter titled “The Pastness of the Past” deals with two main attitudes to past tradition: it is considered to be either a burden to get rid of or a treasure to cherish. For Christians it is primarily the problem of understanding the Church tradition and the sacred writings. It was justly claimed by the Report that at the present time people do not have any longer that optimistic hope that the essentials of the Scripture message outweigh all the historical and cultural barriers and can be taken as such. The problem of Christian hermeneutics, once raised by St. Augustine, has again reappeared. Still all the past data and statements are received in the present day situation and not in an intellectual vacuum, so there are ways to overcome this difficulty of making the past present for us.

The Commission employs the following logic of argumentation. First of all, the Scriptures and tradition of the Church reflect the wisdom and will of God, but the actual encounter with these contents takes place within the present community of faith, which hence should bear particular stress as a locus of revelation, made afresh every time it is proclaimed. Secondly, the whole world and the Church in particular is the temple of the Spirit of God who provides the inner dynamic of the development of Christianity. Thus, Christianity is not a dead code of prescriptions but a living enterprise. And finally and quite radically, the Commission calls for a shift of emphasis from the formulas even of the biblical past to the life-transforming character of Christian teaching.

And also the Report claims that there is another possible approach to the revelation and past experience which allows us to make positive statements about Christianity as an historical religion. There are four points to cover here. First, ‘the pastness of past’ is what makes revelation possible, makes it given, unique and no more subject to change. Secondly, ‘modern man’ sometimes tends to overestimate the historical and cultural determination of the past events and their interpretations. This generation is not the first one which faced the problem of understanding and adequate interpretation, but it certainly tends to fall into an extreme scepticism. Further, there is much material in the past tradition that transcends cultural and temporal barriers and remains mostly unaltered down the ages, for instance, moral teaching in the Old and New Testaments. And finally, the accumulated knowledge of the past is regarded as a necessary and vital thing in other disciplines of human mind. Every scientific paradigm is in fact a series of statements, however inadequate and incomplete on the scale of absolute knowledge, that lead humankind to better understanding of the world in its

laws and in its relations. In a nutshell, this chapter argues that this consciousness of a person as a historic being does not necessarily jettison the Christian past as it is embodied in the Bible and the creeds, and in general it cannot be purely negative in its implications.

As far as the problem of religious language is concerned, the Report admits that it is a problem of great significance and points out that the realm of religion (in particular, Christianity) is not the only sphere where we encounter such a problem. When a person is asked to express his or her intimate and deeply personal ideas or attitudes, words often fail. It must be the more so in a discourse about God by definition, because God is regarded as being beyond all human experience and imagination: 'For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord' (Isa. 55.8). St. Augustine warns about believers claiming to express and fully understand God as well: 'If you have grasped it, it is not God'<sup>10</sup>. At the same time there are positive statements about God one can make, otherwise there is no possibility for God's wisdom and will to be communicated and understood by people. The general rule on the usage of religious language is formulated as follows: 'there are some things that we can affirm that God is *not*; and there are many other things which we can affirm that he *is*, but only in a way that exceeds our affirmation, and never exclusively'<sup>11</sup>.

Another point is the actual understanding and interpretation of the biblical language, because it provides a wide range of ways of speaking about God. What should be mentioned is that the colourful images the Bible abundantly uses refer not only to a cognitive ability, but also aim to appeal to a man as a whole. It is both poetic language, although sometimes the words should be understood in their referential meaning, and also the language of allegory. The latter provides a useful tool of maintaining a certain measure in speaking about God in his reflection in human experience and concepts. One of the possible examples of such an allegorical usage can be the statement that Jesus Christ was raised on the third day. This clause does not only assert that Jesus Christ was dead and now is alive, but also points out to a very special importance of this event for all people. Still, apart from the literal meaning, this statement indicates some fuller truth, and so any other alternative formula would be also an interpretation of this earlier affirmation and as such its role and plausibility will be doubtful.

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<sup>10</sup> *Christian Believing*, 15.

<sup>11</sup> *Christian Believing*, 17.

Two final chapters of the Report “The Christians and the Bible” and “The Christians and the Creeds” are of special significance because implicitly they raise the question of the ultimate authority to interpret the Bible and the creeds. As in the previous chapters it is not only the Bible that becomes the major concern, but also people’s attitude towards it as a vital part of the Christian tradition. The Report admits that in fact the Bible mirrors not only the first Christian records, but also a substantial period of the development of Christianity. As a natural result of this, the Bible is not a homogeneous unity, but it is versatile in its character. At the same time it is canonized in every line and is regarded as the primary source of revelation. This tension brings with it the fact that some people reject the Bible on the grounds of its incongruity. Apart from this scepticism, other possible approaches include the notion of ‘progressive revelation’ and what is known as ‘biblical theology’. The former is defined as God’s disclosure in progress, which can also bring with it the idea that some books of the Christian canon are more ‘revelatory’ than others. This approach is also an application of a fairly modern notion of progress that is anticipated as something always positive. ‘Biblical theology’ covers in fact two distinctive projects: constructing a descriptive discipline in order to work out the underlying theology or theologies of the canon and on the other hand, an attempt to create a normative theology derived from the biblical data. Both enterprises have their own presuppositions and try to ‘read them out’ from the bulk of the text, although it had been written a long time before those ideas were formulated.

Thus, the Bible is still regarded as the principal cornerstone of Christian tradition and practice. The situation with the attitude to the creeds is much more complex. First of all, only Christianity has developed the practice of concise creedal affirmations, whereas both Judaism and Islam put the stress on orthopraxy, proclaiming faith through the life style. All the Christian creeds affirm the centrality of Jesus Christ by linking statements about him and his life with certain basic formulas about God. At the same time it has been done in a particular way when partly biblical and partly philosophical terms were used. The Fathers of the Church made an extensive use of the language of Graeco-Roman philosophy, believing that they could make philosophical language of late antiquity part and parcel of the Christian proclamation of faith. It is quite a disputable fact whether that language was absolutely adequate for the Christians of the first centuries BCE (and it should be stated that the Fathers were perfectly aware of the inadequacy of any human language for speaking about God), but one would not

deny that this language is culturally and philosophically conditioned to a very high degree. As it has already been mentioned above while discussing a general approach to the tradition of the Christian past, one of the possible approaches would be to reformulate the creeds in a language which is in use at the present time. If asked to put the same creed into modern words, the members of the Commission argue that although the nature of the creed and the general contents should remain untouched, the emphasis can be put differently, like including some more points about the work of the Spirit in the world, for instance. As far as the actual language is concerned, the Report goes as far as to state that 'phrases such as, 'of one substance with the Father', would never be used today to express any of our beliefs about the person of Christ'<sup>12</sup>.

If the creedal formulas can be viewed as so distant from the modern understanding of Christian faith, then the question of their necessity for a believer and their nature in general is bound to arise. As far as the role that the creeds play is concerned, there are four basic attitudes to this issue. In the Church of England considerable number of people still regard the creeds as derived from the Bible, making additions to the Bible and together with the Bible making up the norm of Christian belief. On the other hand, among those who evaluate the creeds positively there are some people who find certain difficulties in affirming individual clauses. On the other side of the scale there are those who see the creeds as totally dependent on the specific time and culture of their origin and exposition. Some of those people still acknowledge the role that the creeds played in taking converts into the community, but they pay their respect exclusively to the present experience of the church, that is why they can neither confirm nor deny the creeds in earnest. And finally, there are people who are engaged in Christian discipleship and the creedal affirmations do not matter much to them at all. Sometimes they are happy in inventing a kind of dogmatic construes for themselves. So, we are left with the questions: if one defines the creeds as 'carefully worded formulas, selecting and interpreting those biblical data which seemed essential at that time to a definition of the full content of saving faith'<sup>13</sup>, how should one indicate the role that the creeds can still play in the Church nowadays? It is claimed that no one of the enumerated approaches towards the creeds should be dismissed, but that they should constitute a creative integrity which would help to carry on the theological enterprise of asking about God and accumulating knowledge about him. The creeds are not mere

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<sup>12</sup> *Christian Believing*, 34.

<sup>13</sup> *Christian Believing*, 40.



historical formulas, they are proclaimed at present in both Western and Eastern Churches as a living witness of Christian faith, and although Christians are free to discuss them freely, they still are the classical formularies shared by the whole Christendom.

Summing up the position of the Report towards the role and functions of the Bible and the creeds for Christians nowadays, it can be stated that both the Scriptures and the creeds are regarded as subject to critical analysis, which should not one-sidedly deny the role and importance they perform. The Bible, despite the rise of biblical theology, still maintains the leading role for Christians. The creeds are seen as being subject to historical reassessment to a larger extent, primarily due to the language they use. But both the Scripture and the creeds should be valued as a rich historical inheritance, which cannot be so easily displaced and which provide necessary resources for enriching and testing modern Church practice and understanding of the Christian faith. Being a part of the 'pastness of the past', they are present today and every day by means of Church practice, especially sacramental worship.

The issue of historical and theological data concerning the Bible and the creeds is also expanded and analysed in more detail in two appendices which follow the joint text: "The Unity and Pluriformity of the New Testament" by C.F. Evans and "The Origins of the Creeds" by G.W.H. Lampe.

The rest of the book comprises essays by eight of the eighteen members of the Commission who felt obliged to indicate the points where the joint report was too conservative or too liberal in its implications for them. No wonder that these essays can be roughly divided into two subgroups – those of a conservative and a more radical stance. At the same time it would be an exaggeration to divide the authors using such an opaque pair of terms as apologetic (or traditionalist) and critical. Some of the authors, who defended what can be called a traditionalist view on Christian doctrine, can be quite liberal in some particular issues. On the other hand, such a figure as G.W.H. Lampe who held quite a radical position concerning religious experience and its priority over the Scriptures and the creeds, in the same essay argues for the formative role of the Church and its tradition for a believer.

It seems appropriate to start with the analysis of the more radical constructions and then turn to more positive affirmations about Christian believing today. Deliberately further from the joint report side stand three thinkers – D.E. Nineham,

G.W.H. Lampe and M.F. Wiles – whose positions cannot be defined in other terms than critical.

D.E. Nineham's views can be characterized as both historically oriented and extremely subjective. This theologian applies a purely historical approach in order to undertake a shift from 'authority-oriented' regard of the historical facts to what he calls independent historical research and then claims personal experience as the salient basis for the Christian believing.

The thinker is not happy with the mainstream position of the Church of England that there are Christian truths that are not time-affected and which are considered to be eternal. The main tension, however, appears to be not in the set of data and different problems that Nineham deals with, but in the emphasis he lays on the conclusions drawn from them. To put it in a nutshell, the thinker claims that no reconstruction either of the figure of Jesus Christ or of the Scriptures, or of the Christian creeds can be regarded as exclusively true either because of the diversity of possible interpretations or because of the unique historical and cultural data that influenced the way that the truths of Christianity were expressed. Neither of the arguments contradicts the joint report statement, although here the problems are put in a more dramatic way.

Let us consider how Nineham deals with the problems concerning the language of religion, just to provide us with an example of his mode of thinking.

Although people did not distinguish between such two statements like 'Jesus came down from the mountain' and 'Jesus came down from heaven', these affirmations belong to two different layers of interpretation, either historical (where we can find evidences to say whether it is 'true' or 'false') or non-historical (no historical data can help us to draw any plausible conclusions). The question is crucial indeed because the language that we use considerably influences the way we actually think and bring together the concepts of our mind. And the language of the Bible (even in a modernized translation) is not the same as the common language we speak, so there is a problem of adequate understanding. Speaking more broadly, the problem boils down to the sphere of the Christian hermeneutics, which has already been mentioned as part of the Christian historical heritage in the joint text.

The response to that seemingly post-modern critique can be given from the view-point of the modern cognitive philosophy as well. No one would possibly dispute that the Christians of the formative ages of the past differ from us both in the level of knowledge about the world and in the usage of the language as well. And of course, if

we aim not only to describe, but also to understand them, we have to interpret the data we have from those times. Nonetheless, we have to be absolutely aware of the fact that it will be only our interpretation, and not a kind of a common law. Any interpretation of this kind is a combination of what is formative for us (our tradition, language and culture) and of what we invent or make anew (our own position), which is of secondary nature.

But it seems at times that the theologian is too much devoted to purely individualistic point of view. He claims that all Christian truths can be interpreted in many ways and that many Christians are unhappy about the exact form of tradition in which faith is given to them, and then he concludes that the task of doctrinal theology consists in 'using modern methods to discover the genuine historical truth about the biblical events and then responding to them in a way appropriate in our cultural situation'<sup>14</sup>. More precisely, Christianity should 'fit right' modern Western culture. The task could be considered as a noble one, but if the author has jettisoned the Christian tradition and the Church itself as an accidental set of beliefs, then it is only logical that the only basis left is the realm of personal experience. One should just "'pass over' into the thought, faith and experience of earlier Christians ... to open up the possibility to returning to the present with one's faith deepened, broadened, and renewed, one's unfaith rebuked, one's fears and frettings stilled, and one's path made clear'<sup>15</sup>.

It seems fair to conclude that if one tries to proceed with this logic of thinking, then if one longs to find Christianity in some not so distant future, then one will find either a vague, hopefully moral, teaching, or one will have to presume that all people have to be naturally-born Christians (not to say theists). This point of view is well known and has its right to exist but if we deliberately discard the Bible and the creeds and, finally, the present form of the Church and replace all this with a 'modernized' form, then what shall we leave to our descendents? Only a temporary West European form of some belief called Christianity, which simultaneously claims to have an eternal truth of God, man and universe, which seems to be a contradiction in terms.

As far as Nineham's position is concerned, it can be stated that although the story, which is told to a modern Christian, should be compatible to the rest of their

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<sup>14</sup> *Christian Believing*, 84.

<sup>15</sup> *Christian Believing*, 88.

knowledge about the world, but not at the cost of abandoning what traditionally was cherished in this story itself.

The views articulated by G.W.H. Lampe are of significant interest when this author's usage of terms and his opinion on ecclesiology are considered.

Lampe appeals to the realm of experience where encountering God is to be found. He proposes such a sequence: first comes the experience of revelation, then faith as a person's attitude and interpretation of it which is followed by the theological reflection. In the course of time theologians came to certain dogmatic formulas and so the magnificent corpus of 'the Faith' has been built. Theological reflection itself is not a locus of revelation and when it does not succeed in its task of satisfying rational mind with the 'models' it offers, it can be claimed inadequate. The author here does not consider the statement that God is one substance in three persons as satisfactory for him (a similar standpoint is articulated in the essay by M. Wiles).

It can be briefly noticed that if we recall the terminology of David Hume who made differences between 'belief' and 'faith', then in the usage of these terms one sees that Lampe gets rid of 'faith' absolutely and only a set of beliefs remains present, being either subject to experience or just purely speculative ('the Faith').

Lampe criticizes both the creeds and the Bible as human attempts to analyse and describe rationally the experience of encounter with God. The Bible is considered by him to be a record of particular phenomena seen and comprehended as acts of God. An act of God is defined as a moment of God's self-disclosure to a man, but even as such it can be interpreted in totally different ways. It is a matter of faith to claim whether it is an act of God, an encounter with transcendent Truth, Love and Beauty, or not. Lampe argues that an observer who calls a 'fact' revelatory should a priori be described as being religious. A certain attitude of faith, when being rationally reflected upon, becomes a theological system.

The author considers a certain paradox of faith: 'It seems that faith both results from revelatory experience and also at the same time determines in some measure the revelatory character of the experience by interpreting it as an act of God'<sup>16</sup>.

One of the possible consequences of this is that we cannot believe in anything that we have not experienced personally. The Bible turns out to be a series of recordings of some phenomena considered to be revelatory, but not necessarily, as it again depends

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<sup>16</sup> *Christian Believing*, 105.



on one's own point of view. It is not so clear how the author defines 'faith', whether it is a certain state of mind or attitude or intuition or some set of beliefs and values.

At the same time Lampe seeks to avoid being too subjective. What is recorded in the Bible is not a fiction because it was confirmed by subsequent experience and reflection upon it. Alongside with the criterion of 'personal commitment' Lampe uses *communis sensus*, which he defines as a traditional way of how people think and worship.

This turn to the tradition of the Church enables the author to conclude that 'through all the discontinuities and fresh developments in both theology and faith human beings continue ... to put their trust and confidence and hope in God'<sup>17</sup>.

Lampe certainly tries to make his criticisms creative. He argues that the creeds are given not only to serve as once-for-all answers, but also as constant reminders which stimulate religious asking and searching for truth. At the same time Lampe appears to be at times incoherent in his theological survey. He jettisons the validity of the Scripture and the creeds as historical documents to which no constant unchangeable meaning can be attached. On the other hand, the Church itself is not entirely subjective for him due to his high regard for the sacraments that mediate Christ's present. But this point has not been elaborated by the theologian and taken independently from the Scripture and the creeds; it still leaves room for doubt about how to take account of the two dominical sacraments that were introduced by Jesus Christ and recorded in the Bible. Their significance and importance for Christian tradition (especially Protestant) is at least partly established by the Scriptures. So even in his sacramental construal Lampe cannot be regarded as a Christian thinker, only as a religious philosopher. A separate question remains if this essay was at its right place under one cover with an attempt to defend and reconsider Christian beliefs shared by the whole Church and what kind of authority could be granted to such an individualistic approach and construction.

The essay by Maurice Wiles is a very short one and the problems he tackles are similar to those expressed in his "The Remaking of the Christian Doctrine". Once again he points at the difference between the form of Christian belief and its actual content, which can never be fully expressed in human notions. He regards Christian faith as a response to life and as a transforming basis for life. Wiles begins by arguing that Christianity differs from other religions by its belief in the Holy Trinity and aims to

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<sup>17</sup> *Christian Believing*, 111.

explore what it means. Almost immediately he strikes a reader with a paradoxical statement that knowing historical and philosophical phenomena that led to the occurrence of the Trinitarian belief, he cannot claim with integrity that he believes in One God in Three Persons. But in the next line he is in hurry to say, 'I am happy to accept such language from the tradition as a vehicle of worship and of thinking about God, because much of what lies behind it seems to me to embody things of vital importance for Christian faith today'<sup>18</sup>.

So what kind of language does Wiles offer and what are those things that he considers to be of primary importance? The trend of thinking revealed is similar to that in "The Remaking of the Christian Doctrine": Wiles analyses one by one the clauses of the Nicene Creed as they tell about God the Father Almighty, Jesus Christ his only Son our Lord and the Holy Spirit. But what he is actually talking about is God's revelation and God's grace in the world that provide meaning and hope for the world, and faithful response and transformation of lives for people. God becomes once again the ultimate reality of the world, most fully apprehended by Jesus Christ and later his Church. Wiles calls for the response to the divine by the whole man and states that the intellectual form can be different for different people and as such, arbitrary and provisional. Wiles warns against putting too much weight on the doctrines and not on the action of God and he does not believe that the type of Christianity and Christian community he proposes looks in fact very much alike a philosophers' club. But in effect the thinker offers here not a Christian belief reconsidered, but an existentialist theistic belief, which cannot be reconciled with the contents which the Nicene Creed unfolds.

It is true about all the eight authors of the essays that make up the final part of the Report that every one of them has undertaken an attempt to state their theological position, and the same also refers to those who preferred to defend what might be called an historical doctrinal Christianity.

It seems to be appropriate for the sake of the current survey to outline some general points and approaches of those who held an 'apologetic' position, without a detailed analysis of all the rest of the essays, in order to reconstruct the affirmative statements the theologians preferred to make at the points, where the joint report witnessed tensions and necessity to run an honest investigation. First of all, there is restated the principal impossibility of gaining complete knowledge about God's nature.

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<sup>18</sup> *Christian Believing*, 126.

but although God is absolutely transcendent, he is immanent as well, for what God does he antecedently is (H.E.W. Turner, A.M. Allchin, Hugh Montefiore). A.M. Allchin turns to the Eastern tradition to claim unknowness of God and the kind of theology this notion gives birth<sup>19</sup> (*αποφατική θεολογία*).

As far as the attitude to the past is concerned, all the authors are unanimous in stating the historical character of Christianity and its implications concerning Christ's revelation. The Bible is regarded as the touchstone of Christian faith because although complex and non-homogeneous as a literary work it is the witness of God's action and revelation that cannot be overdone. Although the critical approach argued the case for the fallibility of the scriptural text, it is not a reason strong enough to challenge its role as one of the essentials of faith (J.R. Lucas, C.P.M. Jones, H.E.W. Turner). Likewise religious language is considered to be capable of making and comprehending positive affirmations about God (C.P.M. Jones).

At the same time all the authors without exception admit that Christianity leaves room for individual questioning and searching for one's own answers and responses. As an example can serve the essay by Hugh Montefiore, for whom Christian faith is the result of personal encounter with God primarily. His notion of God resembles very much the one offered by M. Wiles, that of a personal Being above all things and beyond the concept of being. But then Montefiore speaks about God's love and he sees no problem in identifying this love with Jesus Christ<sup>20</sup>. If we follow this trend of vision, there is no surprise that all the doctrines are of a secondary nature and principally provisional. Then the Bible can claim no inerrancy and the set of beliefs should be adequate, i.e. not to contradict knowledge obtained from the other sources of information about the world and self. It is an attempt to validate Christianity from really modern and even, to a certain degree, secular positions; from 'outside', not from the credentials of the Christian faith. And the way to do it is to admit the role of the community of faith in forming both beliefs and life position. Montefiore proclaims the Christian God as creator, redeemer and sanctifier from the position of regarding himself as being 'caught' by Christ, being Christ's disciple. It is a highly personal commitment of faith, but it presents an actual attempt to show how the coherent intelligible bulk of faith as a life standpoint can be formed. Whereas all the theological statements should

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<sup>19</sup> *Christian Believing*, 136-137.

<sup>20</sup> "...I must suppose that God's nature is best likened to the model of human love...; and this is what disclosed to me through Jesus" in *Christian Believing*, 150.

obtain a certain degree of 'adequacy' (in other words, non-contradiction) of their evidence and interpretation, their very adequacy depends on the opinion and tradition of the Church, and not of an individual thinker, as one has seen in the case of D.E. Nineham or G.W.H. Lampe.

This appeal to the Church's opinion and corporate testimony is to be found in the essays by Hugh Montefiore, J.R. Lucas, C.P.M. Jones, A.M. Allchin and to a certain extent in the essay by G.W.H. Lampe, although his one drew different conclusions. Such an unanimity provides a clue that the whole issue of reconsidering the corporate nature of Christian belief and the nature of the Church itself became an acute demand to be stated in the form of the opinion of the Church of England on this question. And this issue has become the central one for the next Report of The Doctrine Commission which was entitled "Believing in the Church. The Corporate Nature of Faith", published in 1981.

### ***c) Conclusion.***

"Christian Believing" was designed to help those who were seeking how to relate Christian faith today to its expression in the Scripture and the creeds, and this was its target. At the same time the Report revealed an astonishing diversity on the essentials of the faith among the Church of England's leading theologians, which found its expression in the Report's structure and contents. Although not easy to write, it was an enterprise worth doing for the Church as a whole and for individual believers alike. The Report not only expressed traditional Christian questions once again, but also stated quite a considerable degree of allowed divergence within Anglican tradition. The Report itself was not intended to be a document of undisputed authority for the Church of England, which is evident from the opening line of the agreed text: 'Christian life is an adventure, a voyage of discovery, a journey, sustained by faith and hope, towards a final and complete communion with the Love at the heart of all things'<sup>21</sup>. Unlike papal encyclicals, this Report did not claim to be final and compulsory for all believers, but rather aimed to direct those in doubt in their search for Christian truth as it is preserved and conveyed by the Church. This Report also indicated a number of crucial questions (theology and science, the nature of religious language, etc), which were raised and

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<sup>21</sup> *Christian Believing*, 3.



discussed in subsequent Doctrine Commission Reports and statements of individual theologians.

As a matter of conclusion it is interesting to draw parallels between “Christian Believing” and the latest Report of the Doctrine Commission “The Mystery of Salvation” (1995). While the main aim of “The Mystery of Salvation” sounds very similar to that of “Christian Believing” – to present the biblical faith as it was transmitted by the church, bearing in mind the intellectual climate of the time the Report is published – there is also a very important admission that ‘in our contemporary society it is increasingly the case that secular people seek *autonomous* forms of self-fulfilment envisaged in *individualistic* terms’<sup>22</sup>. After almost twenty years the Members of the Commission were aware of this increasing tendency of sheer individualism, which affected the domain of intellect as well, but it certainly was not the case with the contributors to “Christian Believing”. Although the Report was written on a fairly high theological level, the time showed that the authors of the 1970s were not fully aware of their own cultural and temporal prejudices and preferences and hence brought them into the Report and their account of Christian faith and dogma.

The reactions of later writers on ‘Christian Believing’ range from moderate to critical<sup>23</sup>, and they are quite right in placing this book within the frame of the liberal theology of the 1970s, when much attention was paid to deconstructing traditional views, not to theological quality. It is next to impossible to claim that ‘Christian Believing’ was an adequate and theologically significant response of the Church of England to liberal theology, as it followed roughly the same path of thinking. That is why it is very instructive to see which strategy the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England applied in subsequent Reports, and what theology the Church of England constructed to prove its position.

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<sup>22</sup> Church of England, Doctrine Commission of the General Synod, *The Mystery of Salvation: The story of God's gift* (London: Church House Publishing, 1995), 32.

<sup>23</sup> See, for instance, Hastings, Adrian *A History of English Christianity 1920-1985* (London: Collins, 1986), 650; review on ‘Christian Believing’ by Don Cupitt in *Theology* vol. 79, No 667 (1976), 108-110.

### ***3. Trinitarian Theology – A Revival?***

This chapter is an attempt to reflect upon theology presented in two of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England Reports “We Believe in God” and “We Believe in the Holy Spirit”. It is primarily a textual analysis of the Reports and following the route of thinking they proposed. This is not a task of reconstructing Anglican systematic theology yet, but it certainly claims to reveal the Trinitarian core of the beliefs of the Church of England. However, in order to assess the Reports and their role adequately, this analysis should be put into a much wider context and the reasons why the Church felt itself obliged to air its opinion at that certain period of time should be explained.

The 1970s saw a serious controversy in Great Britain over the figure of Jesus Christ. This topic drew not only acute attention, but also a severe critique from different theological quarters, reaching its summit in the publication of “The Myth of God Incarnate”. It might be argued that the second Person of the Trinity has always been extremely important for the Western Church and the christological controversy would have not only undermined the Trinitarian doctrine, but also seriously injured Christian faith in general. The point should be made though, as it will be shown below, that this dispute remained primarily academic and as such could not involve the whole Church into a considerable debate.

On the contrary, the Charismatic renewal in the Church of England has belonged mostly to the sphere of experience and took time before being articulated as a distinctive theological position. Being part and parcel of the modern life of the Church of England, it should not have also been theologically overheard because of its strong impact upon the present work of God by means of His Spirit among His people and because of its other numerous implications for the expression of the Trinitarian faith.

It would be a gross overstatement to claim that only because of these controversies the Church of England articulated its Trinitarian doctrine. But the impact of “The Myth of God Incarnate” and the debate, which shortly followed, should be taken into account, regardless how differently the function of this book can be viewed. The same is true about the Charismatic movement, and here it is much more evident that the publishing of the Report “We Believe in the Holy Spirit” got a considerable impetus from this phenomenon.

There can be of course proposed an additional number of publications and articles worth considering here, but the necessary restriction on the scope of the material is largely due to the wish to produce a comprehensive and detailed study of the key texts.

### ***a) Christological Controversies (The Myth of God Incarnate and the Debate).***

The series of essays edited by John Hick under the title “The Myth of God Incarnate” was published by SCM Press in 1977, just one year later than “Christian Believing”, and produced a much wider response than the latter. In fact, some people compared the effect of this publication with that of Robinson’s “Honest to God”<sup>1</sup>, published almost fifteen years earlier and having produced an enormous impact of a theological bombshell explosion.

As in the case with “Honest to God”, the greater part of the public attention was due to the controversial title of the book. Another reason was the list of the contributors to this publication, all of them being prominent theologians and some being clergymen of high rank in the Church of England. The most evident example of such a name is Maurice Wiles, Canon of Christ Church, Oxford, and still the Chairman of the Church of England’s Doctrine Commission at that time. John Hick, Professor of Theology in Birmingham University and a defender of faith in philosophical writings, was an editor, and among the rest of the contributors were Michael Goulder and Frances Young from Birmingham University, Leslie Houlden, Principal of Ripon College, Cuddesdon, a leading Anglican theological college, Dennis Nineham from Keble College, Oxford, and last but not least Don Cupitt, who became well known for his acting as a spokesman for the church on the television. All the authors came to the conclusion that the right time had come for reformulating and critical assessment of one more pillar of the Christian faith, the doctrine of the Incarnation, and for them it was a natural outcome of what the nineteenth-century theologians had done with the traditional view on the doctrine of creation and on the infallibility of the Scriptures. Now they aimed at rediscovering the Christian origins and criticising the view on Jesus Christ as it had been presented in the Nicene Creed. To put it in a nutshell, they agreed on Christ’s importance in God’s purpose of salvation and reconciliation, but for them ‘the later

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<sup>1</sup> J.A.T. Robinson, *Honest to God* (London: SCM Press, 1963).

conception of him as God incarnate, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity living a human life, is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us'<sup>2</sup>.

It is quite clear that this book carries on with the line of scepticism and relativism that was discerned in some of the essays included in "Christian Believing" and in Wiles' "The Remaking of the Christian Doctrine" and which has already been depicted in detail in Chapter 2. This time the main intention was to apply the scientific approach and the criteria of truth and fallacy to the area of history, and the corollary was that the majority of the authors provided their critique of the doctrine of the incarnation based on the 'critical-historical' arguments. Whether the notions of 'mythological' and 'objective' (i.e., historical) could provide a coherent cognitive method for tackling the question of the incarnation of Jesus Christ and its doctrinal expression or not, had not been discussed at due length and caused considerable critique afterwards.

But as both "The Myth of God Incarnate" and several published responses to it are quite a complicated piece of theology, of both apologetic and critical stance, let us use the following plan of evaluating this material: first, to consider the implications from the book's pivotal argument, already quoted, that the concept of Jesus being the Second Person of the Trinity and being God incarnate is 'a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us'. Secondly, it seems worthwhile to analyse some basic assumptions which underlined the whole discourse, however not always in an evident way. Thirdly, only then it seems appropriate to give a brief outline of the actual critique which is based on the grounds of historical evidence and show if the authors proposed their own points of view on possible reinterpretations of Christology, which leads to point four: the discussion of Christology in the context of Christianity and the perspective of possible 'non-incarnational' vision of Christianity. In this point the discussion of "The Myth of God Incarnate" should shift to the critical responses it provoked and especially to the publication of "Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued" (SCM, 1979), as it contains the proceedings from the discussion held between the authors of "The Myth of God Incarnate" and their opponents in Birmingham University and this series of essays also takes into account those initial critical responses which were made on the spur of the moment soon after the publication in 1977.

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<sup>2</sup> Hick, John, (ed.), *The Myth of God Incarnate* (London: SCM Press, 1977), ix.

There is not much use describing every essay in equally great detail, as the authors confessed that they have much in common and it would make even the briefest outline bulky and indigestible. This is even more true about “Incarnation and Myth” and other critical responses, where some of the contributors offered a more sophisticated review of their arguments. The plan proposed is not an ideal one and is largely inspired by the material itself, but it is aimed to show the methodology applied by the authors, to indicate the problems of possible misunderstanding, largely linked with inaccurate usage of terminology, and also to mark some of the implications for a wider context that this book drew.

### **i. Analysis of the central thesis in “The Myth of God Incarnate”.**

For Don Cupitt, who is one of the contributors to “The Myth of God Incarnate”, it seemed appropriate to claim that such a statement as, for example, ‘Jesus is God’ is ‘not a definition but a synthetic assertion to whose truth or falsity historical evidence is relevant’.<sup>3</sup> To prove his point, he uses quite a sophisticated philosophical argumentation. Strangely enough, it seems to escape the attention of most of the contributors to “The Myth of God Incarnate” that the statement that the ‘concept of Jesus Christ as God incarnate is a mythological or poetic way of expressing his significance for us’ is not a definition either and in its own turn conceals numerous difficulties. Frances Young tried to put the same idea into a much more accurate form: ‘christological statements should be regarded as belonging not to the language of philosophy, science or dogmatics, but rather to the language of confession and testimony’.<sup>4</sup> But it should be noticed that this position did not hinder her from criticising Christology from the predominantly historical position (see chapters 2 and 5).

However, even being subject to criticism, the thesis contains a very important idea that Jesus Christ is exercising on us his ‘significance’. Although the authors held a whole variety of viewpoints on Jesus Christ, no one denied the paramount impact of his personality, teaching and life. Being very cautious about putting too much stress on the life of Jesus of Nazareth, they prefer to talk about ‘Christ event’, ‘experience of Christ’ or of his acting as ‘man for others’. Thus, M. Wiles recalls the incarnation as the means of making possible ‘a profound inner union of the divine and the human in the

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<sup>3</sup> Goulder, Michael (ed.), *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued* (London: SCM Press, 1979), 33.

<sup>4</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 13.



experience of grace'<sup>5</sup>; for Leslie Houlden, through Jesus Christ the experience of God became attainable; for Dennis Nineham, Jesus Christ was 'the new humanity'.<sup>6</sup> All the terms used here are highly abstract and somehow even impersonal, but the significance for us, for mankind, is constantly stressed.

Another conclusion to be drawn from the thesis is that the usage of the term 'mythological' (or 'metaphoric', as it is preserved in Hick's later writings) presupposes a contrary notion of 'historic' or 'literal'<sup>7</sup> understanding and usage of the christological notions and arguments. Being put in such a crude way, the argument does not make any difference between myth as a fairy tale and myth as a distinctive type of discourse and worldview with its own logic and degree of vitality. Surprisingly little was said on this topic in the book itself, the only exception was Wiles' analysis of myth in Chapter 8, "Myth in Theology". Wiles recognises the manifold nature of myth in general, and more precisely he sees that the main difficulty in speaking about Jesus Christ is that all the affirmations should be linked to the historical data concerning the figure of Jesus. But still providing a certain degree of historical appropriateness present in our knowledge about Jesus Christ he claims it possible for the Christian 'myth' to convey its 'ontological correlate'<sup>8</sup> and maintain its power undiminished. Here nothing is said about whether a myth may be true or whether it escapes subjectivity for merits of its own nature. It is quite instructive for a researcher to notice that the same sort of logic governs the argument when the authors spoke about their own experience of Jesus Christ and his importance for their experience of the divine in their life, as if human experience, especially in the process of its communication, was free from all fallacies and relevant for everyone. This strange blind psychological and more widely anthropological optimism can be found everywhere when people talk about cultural conditioning and its role in the process of attaining and communicating knowledge down the generations, at the same time giving their own personal testimonies and confessions on ultimate issues (such as in our case incarnation of Christ).

The last conclusion to draw here is connected with the notion of Jesus Christ's 'significance for us' and consists in quite positive attempts of the authors to provide their own points of view on what is to happen with Christology and more widely, with

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<sup>5</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 161.

<sup>6</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 187.

<sup>7</sup> "The Nicene formula was undoubtedly intended to be understood literally" (J.Hick), in *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 177.

<sup>8</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 165.

Christianity when belief in God's incarnation in a human life is cast away. It is a corollary of the same optimism which is to be found here.

## **ii. Analysis of the basic assumptions of the argument.**

If we return to the preface of the book, we can find here a plea that 'the ideas and arguments in this book (might) be judged on their merits rather than by their conformity to some previous stage of Christian development'<sup>9</sup>. Thus, it is claimed that it is quite possible to give one's own account on doctrinal matters and regard previous formulas to be an historical heritage, which needs constant updating. Church dogmatics is treated as a part of church history (or even archaeology) which should coincide with 'modern' knowledge and worldview.

The idea of Christian 'development' assumes also the notion of progress. With more and more historical data being available to us, the research can be much more accurate and precise. Following the same logic, the quest for truth in history leads to the accumulation of knowledge in the sphere of theology as well. At least, that is what can be deduced from the thesis quoted above and from the claims the contributors to "The Myth of God Incarnate" made in their enterprise.

The idea that an 'objective' truth can be achieved on the modern stage of our knowledge seems to be quite a bad application of the quasi-scientific approach to the area of humanities. The more so when the authors began to sound as if modern historical theories and data made the knowledge of God more accessible for them. A very vivid example of such a trend of thought is Hick's view on soteriology. He discusses it in the context of comparing the notion of the way to salvation in Christianity and other world religions. His basic idea is that the adherents of different religions in their longing for being saved come to knowledge of one and the same God, who is given different names, and this inevitably leads to the denial of the Christian claim that all people are saved by and in Jesus Christ. Hick points out that 'If Jesus was literally God incarnate, and if it is by his death alone that man can be saved, and by their response to him alone that they can appropriate their salvation, then the only doorway to eternal life is Christian faith. It would follow that the large majority of the human race so far have not been saved'<sup>10</sup>. The point made is of vital importance indeed, and the only answer can be that we do not know how God is going to save those who have not

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<sup>9</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, x.

<sup>10</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 180.

heard the Good News (because it has not been ultimately revealed to us by God himself, and probably will never be). The admittance that we in fact cannot know God's mind and will even on the subject which concerns our destiny does not mean that we find ourselves in the abyss of despair and ignorance – we know enough about God to be able to hope that God has his own ways and will never leave his creation unassisted and the reason is his love to mankind. And this love of God, embodied for the human race by Jesus Christ the Saviour, can be a secure base for attaining God's knowledge. For the contributors to "The Myth of God Incarnate", even when they do justice to divine mystery, human knowledge in history or studies of religions, or philosophy of language becomes the means of talking about God as a thing among other things and they dismiss the doctrine of the incarnation as intellectually unconvincing. The incarnation is a stumbling block for them, whereas, for instance, for Karl Barth it was the only condition of talking about God and his works: 'What God is as God, the divine individuality and characteristics, the *essentia* or 'essence' of God, is something which we shall encounter either at the place where God deals with us as Lord and Saviour, or not at all'<sup>11</sup>.

All the discourse about achieving certain knowledge also brings to surface the issue of what can distract knowledge, namely anthropomorphism and prejudices associated with this tendency. But while Frances Young warns against worshipping an anthropomorphic God<sup>12</sup>, the same accusation can be made of numerous passages in the book, including her own articles. Thus, Young herself finds it necessary to tell 'two stories': one of a man who lived and died as an 'archetypal believer', and the other about transcendent God, who for the reasons of morality takes upon himself responsibility for the created order and becomes 'involved in the reality of human existence with its compromises, its temptations, its suffering, its pain, its injustice, its cruelty, its *death*'<sup>13</sup>. The question is bound to arise if the language used in the quoted passage is indeed literal or is supposed to be understood in a poetic or metaphorical way? The part in Chapter 2 where she discusses the matter of theodicy and proclaims a suffering God, who should satisfy our moral demands, is very much of an anthropomorphic idiom.

The same can be said about Dennis Nineham's Epilogue, where the author distinguishes between the historical Jesus and the preached Christ, who has to change

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<sup>11</sup> Barth, Karl, *Church Dogmatics*, Vol. II, Part I, (Edinburgh, 1961), 261.

<sup>12</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 42.

<sup>13</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 37.



constantly in accordance with cultural changes and who 'is to continue to mediate the nature, grace and demands of God to succeeding generations'<sup>14</sup>. Anthropomorphism springs out inevitably, because the authors have brought too much of themselves, their views on truth, religious experience, historical presuppositions, and so on to the actual discourse without noticing it and claiming to tell a word of wisdom for 'modern man'.

Probably the last point to be made, as far as the underlying assumptions of the argument are concerned, is that concerning the problem of religious – and incarnational – language. Sometimes it is not easy to discern what was actually criticised by the authors: the incarnation as an historic event or its expression in creeds and traditional formulas (and Don Cupitt in Chapter 7 argued that seemingly traditional opinions could be of a very recent origin). And quite a separate problem is linked with the nature of religious language as distinctive from, say, everyday language. J. Hick made a claim that 'the real point and value of the incarnational doctrine is not indicative but expressive, not to assert a metaphysical fact but to express a valuation and evoke an attitude'<sup>15</sup>. It is by all means a very good point which helps to understand and assess the whole discussion, but it stays unclear if it is applicable to the doctrine of incarnation only, or to the religious discourse in general. If the latter is relevant, then it is applicable to the speculations of the authors themselves and leaves room for questioning the status and appropriateness of that construal.

### **iii. 'Historical criticism' in "*The Myth of God Incarnate*".**

"The Myth of God Incarnate" followed the path of criticising Christian affirmations from the historical perspective in several aspects. History as a subject is peculiar in that a historian, dealing with some data and evidence, always offers his own interpretation of them. As everywhere in the humanities, one does not confront a pure fact, rather its interpretation.

One of the possible interpretations of the origin of the incarnational belief was proposed by Goulder in his chapter "Jesus, the Man of Universal Destiny". He offers what might be called a naturalistic account of Jesus' appearance to his disciples in the upper room (John 20:19). For Goulder the impetus to 'witnessing Jesus coming' by the apostles was given by Peter's conviction on Easter Sunday that Jesus had not died, which was in fact a psychological mechanism to overcome distress after his Master's

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<sup>14</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 200.

<sup>15</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 178.

execution. The disciples as a group sharing the same attitudes and feeling of acute danger were prone to mass hysteria and hallucinations. Goulder does not describe how psychological illusion became a vital ground for launching a two thousand year project of the Christian church, and even his account of Jesus as a 'man of universal destiny'<sup>16</sup> on the same scale with Churchill or Joan d'Arc, who saw themselves as both embodiments and saviours of their communities, does not really help much to see the significance of Jesus and the titles He was crowned with (especially problematic it seems to explain the origin and maintenance of his being 'the Second Person of the Holy Trinity'). Goulder's attempt to show the significance of Christ's life, teaching and passion by usage of this 'man of universal destiny' metaphor does not really cover the meaning that the Church attributes to Jesus Christ.

Goulder concludes in this chapter that though he finds himself unable to speak about homoousion, or 'Christology of substance' using his term, he still is able to claim 'Christology of agency' as a way of keeping God's purpose and Jesus' role in its accomplishment.

Chapter 4, also by M. Goulder, aims at sustaining a hypothesis that the incarnation is the result of mingling two 'myths' – a Galilean eschatological and a Samaritan Gnostic one. Goulder a bit light-heartedly dismisses Galilean eschatology, because Jesus Christ has not come to judge the living and the dead and to establish God's kingdom so far, and turns to the Acts reference to Simon Magus (Acts 8:4-25) to give his own interpretation of what was happening in the Samaritan church and whether Simon Magus considered himself as an incarnation of God's wisdom or glory. The doctrine of incarnation as we know it is presented as a combination of those two mythologies in the Pauline epistles already. Such a novel theory received all sorts of critical comments and responses and the discussion continued beyond "The Myth of God Incarnate" pages. The attention of the current research, however, has been drawn by the author's conclusion about the doctrine of incarnation, which reads as 'What I mean is that it is not believable today, and that our generation is called to formulate its Christology anew'<sup>17</sup>.

Regardless of historical proofs that can be given in order to sustain this Samaritan theory produced by M. Goulder the common point that traditional Christology is not relevant today any longer should be indicated once again. It is

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<sup>16</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 56ff.

<sup>17</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 85.

claimed to be largely due to the problem of cultural conditioning, that we cannot adequately understand people of other cultures and times. This point was extensively used by Frances Young in her two chapters "A Cloud of Witnesses" and "Two Roots or a Tangled Mass?" as well.

Young's analysis of the New Testament witnesses about Jesus Christ aims at demonstrating that the Christological and incarnational language cannot be regarded as found exclusively in the New Testament, but can be traced throughout the whole cultural area. She speaks primarily not about the historical figure of Jesus Christ but about the actual reaction to the 'Christ-event', about the interpretation of the given experience. According to her point of view, the Pauline epistles cannot serve as a basis of the traditional doctrine of incarnation; on the contrary, this doctrine is read into the text. The Patristic period of the doctrine is considered critically as well; here the main shortcoming is seen in the usage of a certain philosophical framework of the late antiquity. In other words, both New Testament and Patristic Christology are regarded as 'parasitic' upon their contemporary cultural presuppositions and a certain philosophical framework. Moreover, the Patristic thought, when it is seen through the modern cognitive approach, is claimed to be logically incoherent. Young makes quite a reasonable point that Christology is often linked with soteriology and invoking a certain response of faith.

All the mentioned points are regarded by Young as sufficient to dismiss Christology and the doctrine of incarnation as culturally conditioned and intellectually non-valid. It is not absolutely clear why the indisputable fact of the language of the Fathers being culturally and historically conditioned or of the strong interrelation between Christology and soteriology (it is doubtful that many Christians were at pains proclaiming Christ as Lord *and* Saviour) should lead to such a strong conclusion. Moreover, Young's own agenda of Christology-to-be seems to be quite incoherent and relevant to a historically limited sector of Western world. For instance, when she discusses Christology in relation to Trinitarian theology, she raises a question of whether the doctrine of Trinity performs functions that would be desirable to keep in theology and practical Christian devotion. From her point of view, there are two such functions: first of all, it allows God to be involved in his creation, and secondly, the doctrine of Trinity with its paradoxical language serves as a warning against considering the Christian God too easy to achieve and grasp by means of human reason. It is highly

arguable that the role of doctrine of the Trinity for the Christians is limited solely to these two points.

Young's account of the cultural climate of the first centuries CE took new overtones in her chapter "Two Roots or a Tangled Mass?" which was a critical reply to Goulder's claim to reconstruct a viable hypothesis to explain the origins of Christology with the help of the Samaritan Gnostic myth. Her claim was that it is virtually impossible to concentrate on a separate area or community exclusively because of the extreme complexity and diversity of cults, ideologies and philosophical teachings in the Graeco-Roman world. Here she attempts a much more accurate reconstruction of possible emerging of the incarnational idea with references to a very wide historical and cultural context, both Jewish and pagan.

The doctrine of incarnation is seen rooted in the general cultural atmosphere of the Roman civilization and its development is constructed according to the following theoretical model: Young regards the usage of the phrases as 'Son of God' to be common in that area and in ancient Greece as well, which is also relevant to the notion of apotheosis, or ascent to the heavens. The myth about Hercules or the biblical account of Elijah can serve as an example of such ascension. The next point Young makes is that the concept of heavenly beings coming to succour men in times of need was widely present and accepted.

However, to my mind to draw the conclusion that it was enough to depict such a heavenly being become incarnate on earth would be a gross exaggeration and the analogies between Jewish and pagan cultures used by the author would prove inadequate. Young justly claims that 'pagan mythology could envisage a docetic incarnation; Jewish legend could envisage the coming of an angel in disguise'<sup>18</sup>, as it is in the Book of Tobit. The picture became even more complicated with the subsequent spread of Gnosticism, including its Christian branch.

The general conclusion that Young finally came to is that 'the significance of ... Jesus has been interpreted according to categories supplied by the supernatural speculations of the Graeco-Roman world' and thus the rootedness of the doctrine of incarnation in the historicity of Jesus Christ, 'though constantly asserted, has been permanently insecure'<sup>19</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 119.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

The critical position of Young leads her to speaking of Christological origins as a 'tangled mass' which is extremely difficult, in fact impossible, to reconstruct adequately now, and so make the assertion of Jesus Christ being God incarnate valid and relevant. At the same time she sustains Christology, but only as her personal testimony to religious experience she obtained.

It is worthwhile to notice Young position as a historian on the possibility of deducing any kinds of stern affirmations about the historical Jesus and the Christological origins from the historical evidence available and on constructing theories like the one proposed by Goulder. None of these theories can be universally acceptable, because all the supposed analogies or parallels 'can be regarded as hypothetical reconstructions in the minds of modern scholars corresponding to no historical reality'<sup>20</sup>. Logically enough, this general comment can be also applied to the whole enterprise of "The Myth of God Incarnate", although the authors themselves did not seem to take a full account of this argument, either when discussing historical relevance of Jesus of Nazareth or the incarnational doctrine in the New Testament or in the Fathers of the Church.

Such a critique can be applied to the position by Hick that we are totally confused when we aim at speaking about Jesus as an historic individual due to the fragmentary character of the knowledge about Him we have and to the claim by Hick that 'communal or individual imagination has projected its own ideal upon as much of the New Testament data as will sustain it, producing a Christ-figure who meets the spiritual needs of his devotees'<sup>21</sup>.

Dennis Nineham in his turn criticises historical validity of the statement that Jesus Christ exercised a unique moral perfection and feels it within his power to conclude that in this case one cannot claim Christ's metaphysical uniqueness.

A common theme is the critique of the historicity of Jesus Christ and of the biblical account of him, especially Christological and incarnational statements in the Fourth Gospel and Pauline epistles. The second line of criticisms is targeted at the development of the doctrine of the incarnation in the Patristic period, which is attacked on the grounds of its cultural and philosophical conditioning and logical incoherence.

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<sup>20</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 103.

<sup>21</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 167-168.



## ix. Incarnation and Christianity.

The last issue to be considered in the current analysis of “The Myth of God Incarnate” is the problem of estimating Christology in a broader context of Christian faith.

Being put in the strongest form, the question is whether incarnational faith in Jesus’ uniqueness (in that while being fully man it is true of him, and of him alone, that he is also fully God, the second Person of the Holy Trinity) is in fact essential to Christianity<sup>22</sup>. The present volume provides both negative and positive answers to this question.

Wiles makes a claim that we cannot speak about one and distinctive Christology offered by the Church in accordance with Young’s corollary that instead of reconstructing traditional Christology we can build our own multiple Christologies under the necessary condition that ‘no single one is to be regarded as ‘the truth’ or beyond critical discussion’<sup>23</sup>. The importance for the authors to undertake the task of constructing their own versions of Christology and views on the incarnation is required by the programme to maintain Christ’s significance in communicating the religious experience and has been already discussed.

The negative answer is twofold: first, M. Wiles claimed that due to the doctrine of creation and God’s positive purpose in history, God’s presence remains mediated and palpable even without the doctrine of the incarnation. The reaction of Don Cupitt is much more rigid.

Cupitt sees the incarnational view on Jesus Christ and the subsequent worshipping him as the Son of God as the step, which is to a large extent negative in its practical implications. He claims that this doctrine ‘has had some harmful effects upon the understanding of Jesus’ message, on the understanding of his relation to God and even upon faith in God’<sup>24</sup>. For Cupitt the later doctrine of incarnation has shifted the primary stress upon the figure of Jesus, undermining God’s transcendence and sovereign will. God the Father is depicted by Cupitt as a Deity who asks for free and creative human response, which was suppressed for him by the Christian Church and a new worldview, which cherished due obedience to the authority. Cupitt draws a somehow caricatured picture of the Western Church as an embodiment of a patriarchal

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<sup>22</sup> See, e.g., Wiles, M., Christianity without Incarnation? in *The Myth of God Incarnate*.

<sup>23</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 39.

<sup>24</sup> *The Myth of God Incarnate*, 145.

family model, whereas the Eastern Church - and Christ there - are for him a Hellenistic paradigm of exalting the King. Apart from criticising the Church as an institution, Cupitt launches a crusade against the depiction of the Trinity in the West, where God the Father was widely presented as an old man on the throne, which for Cupitt is the rudest form of anthropomorphism. But at the same time the iconoclastic zeal of Cupitt does not lead to a restating of the Trinitarian doctrine – on the contrary, he seeks to validate a very impersonal religious experience of the divine and its counter-relation with the human at the cost of the historical Jesus and personal Christology.

Pseudo Reformation claims to restore the biblical message of Jesus and dismiss all the later doctrine (which is for the authors actually read into the Scripture) makes it evident that the Bible is regarded as being beyond history and still crucial for contemporary Christians, although the text and its ideas are conveyed in culturally and historically conditioned language. Christology, inevitably linked with a historical figure of Jesus Christ and its claim about God's incarnation in his Son and the Second person of the Trinity, is seen as no more relevant for 'modern' man and is designed by the authors to be substituted with some theocentric model of speaking about the divine intervention in the created order and human possibility and vocation to respond to this ultimate divine call. That is the most general conclusion, which does not take into account the untidiness of the terminology used by the authors and the problems of logic and religious language present in "The Myth of God Incarnate". These problems, alongside with several more, were discussed during the series of critical responses this book provoked.

#### **x. 'Myth of God' Debate: looking for common ground.**

The publication of "The Myth of God Incarnate" caused a substantial number of critical responses from all the quarters of the Church of England. As in the case with "Honest to God", the major surprise was why there were in fact so many responses, as the subject of the book and most of its argumentation could not be regarded as new for theologians. Those who bought it being attracted by the title soon found that the book was almost indigestible. Others found it quite predictable and non-coherent both in argumentation and its implications.

"The Truth of God Incarnate" (London: SCM, 1977), edited by Michael Green, Rector of St. Aldate's, Oxford, and editor of 'I Believe' series, appeared only six weeks after the publication of "The Myth of God" and was evidently written on the spur of the

moment from a very strong and uncompromising apologetic stance. For instance, the anonymous Preface calls the authors of “The Myth” propagandists, not academic thinkers any more<sup>25</sup>, and answers back with propaganda as well.

At the same time Chapter 5 written by Brian Hebblethwaite, Dean of Chapel of Queen’s College, Cambridge, provides a comprehensive coverage on such issues as the possibility and importance of the incarnation, and also some of its implications. For instance, he sustains the importance and uniqueness of the incarnation in the sphere of morals and spirituality, asserts its priority in obtaining knowledge about God and also gives an insight of the correlation of the historical event of the incarnation to the Church’s present experience in worship and sacraments<sup>26</sup>.

The Postscript, being a slightly revised version of the review of “The Myth of God” by John Macquarrie, Oxford, casts some light on one of the main reasons for the confusion provoked by the book. He said that the ‘writers waver between a critique of the *myth* of incarnation and the *metaphysics* of incarnation’<sup>27</sup> and that they often failed to distinguish between the two. The question of metaphysics in relation to God is the subject of systematic theology, and some of the conclusions drawn by the contributors of “The Myth of God” claim to have this status, whereas the book itself is certainly not systematic by nature, but historical. Also Macquarrie pointed out that the authors did not pay attention to what had already been done before them in the area of systematics on the topic of incarnation by continental theologians, such as von Balthasar, Rahner and others. Macquarrie’s remark about the necessity to distinguish between the myth and the metaphysics of incarnation seems in this context relevant and quite helpful as it points out one of the areas of misunderstanding.

John Macquarrie also contributed to the next critical review on “The Myth of God”, which was published in 1981 and edited by A.E. Harvey from Oxford. “God Incarnate: Story and Belief” is a corporate work of a group of Oxford scholars who were challenged by “The Myth of God” and tried to give their own perspective on the doctrine of incarnation. Besides articles, the current volume also contains a sermon preached by the former Oxford Moral and Pastoral Theology professor Peter Baelz in Durham Cathedral on Christmas Day, 1980.

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<sup>25</sup> Green, Michael, (ed.), *The Truth of God Incarnate* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1977), 14.

<sup>26</sup> *The Truth of God Incarnate*, 103-104.

<sup>27</sup> *The Truth of God Incarnate*, 140.

Here John Macquarrie reviews different affirmations made about Jesus Christ (historical, theological and metaphysical) and argues that these affirmations need different categories of truth to be applied. The author reminds readers that however often taken for granted, the concept of truth is complex one and needs serious consideration in every single case. Scientists use one criterion of truth, which is completely different from what one is encouraged to say in the area of arts, for example. Resemblance between the work of art and the account of Jesus Christ found in the Gospels lies in the fact that in both cases we have a ready interpretation of the 'Christ-event' and through our 'dis-covering' of it, is the truth in it available for us<sup>28</sup>. But even a work of art should be true to its subject (which is either outer reality or inner sensations), and the question about the truth of incarnation is still bound to arise. Although there can be some resemblance between a work of art and a biblical passage, the question whether incarnation was true or not belongs to another type of statements. So Macquarrie offers analysis of the third type of truth, different from the truth of the work of art and from historical truth as well, which he calls 'ontological truth'. It has not been elaborated by him how one is to understand this notion, and he is trying to illustrate his point by giving examples and arguing that this kind of truth is intrinsic to all the theories of man. This approach can be regarded as inspired by Karl Barth, who started with God and Jesus in order to understand man, not trying to exalt humanity to the level of divinity. This question of how one understands truth is only of many philosophical, logical and theological questions that found their place and expression in the last significant group response to "The Myth of God Incarnate", which was published in 1979 by SCM Press as well and is called "Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued"<sup>29</sup>.

This 250-page book is the proceedings of the colloquy between the contributors of "The Myth" and their critics in Birmingham from 10<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> July 1978. The editor Michael Goulder, being aware of the complexity of the material and papers which constituted the bulk of the book, made some rearrangements and the final text is structured on the topical, rather than the chronological, basis. Professor Basil Mitchell of Oxford agreed to be the chairperson, and among the rest of the contributors were three scholars from Cambridge: Brian Hebblethwaite, Nicholas Lash, a Roman Catholic and professor of Divinity, and Professor Charles Moule, New Testament scholar, - also

<sup>28</sup> Harvey A.E. (ed.), *God Incarnate: Story and Belief* (London: SPCK, 1981), 31.

<sup>29</sup> Goulder, Michael, (ed.), *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued* (London: SCM Press, 1979)



Professor Stephen Sykes of Durham, whose article “The Incarnation as the Foundation of the Church” was prepared for another occasion, but nevertheless was included into the volume. Other personalities include Professor Graham Stanton, King’s College, London; Bishop Leslie Newbigin and John Rodwell, theologian and researcher in biological sciences from Lancaster.

The Preface by M. Wiles helped M. Goulder in identifying seven main issues in “The Myth of God” and thus structuring otherwise too much a diverse material. The seven questions are the following:

Are the authors of “The Myth of God” still Christians; how far has ‘incarnation’ changed its meaning in modern discussion, and are we speaking of a ‘literal’ incarnation; is the doctrine logically coherent; do all Christian doctrines stand or fall together; is the New Testament evidence clear or ambiguous; how to compromise the centrality of Christ and the claims of the other faiths; and finally, granted the cultural conditioning of all Christians, can we believe in the incarnation?<sup>30</sup>

It is evident that the discussion this time aimed at being not solely historical in its character and that attention was also paid to the problem of identifying truth and to the question of logic in regard to the incarnation. Although the main bulk of the discussion was dedicated naturally enough to the problem of historical evidence, due to the purpose of the current analysis it seems relevant to turn to the issue of whether incarnation is seen in a ‘literal’ sense at all. This issue should precede the historical discussion as it provides a clearer terminology and enables the authors regard the doctrine itself grounded in an area of facts, and not only as a set of human projections or interpretations.

Nicholas Lash in his article “Interpretation and Imagination” admits that the contributors to “The Myth of God” undertook a very serious theological task in asking questions of ultimate importance, but he makes it very clear that from his point of view their distinction between ‘literal’ and ‘metaphoric’ was a wrong cognitive approach whatever. Their assumption that Christology and its language are not only dated, but simply irrelevant and incomprehensible for modern man draws very problematic implications on understanding rationality, interpretation and also objectivity. Lash sees this approach as a blind way for both exploring the past and bringing meaning to the present. Apart from dissatisfaction with the general methodology used by the authors of

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<sup>30</sup> *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, ix-x.



“The Myth of God”, Lash complained that they ‘are not sufficiently puzzled by classical christological models. They are quite confident both that they know exactly how those models were used in the past and that they are no longer available today as expressions of what we believe concerning Jesus the Christ’<sup>31</sup>. Lash’s position is the opposite one, he is not confident about dismissing traditional models of Christology on this ground.

In general, a very positive feature of the book is that it gave room for both essays and critical responses to them, sometimes even for the consequent responses to this critique! It is not much point in trying to retell every thread of argumentation, and in order to give a comprehensive scope of the diversity and philosophical nature of the argumentation it is enough to follow two lines: the discussion of the doctrine of incarnation from the position of formal logic and the analysis of the problem of the necessity of preserving the incarnation for full-fledged Christianity.

The article by Don Cupitt “Jesus and the Meaning of God” evoked most of the responses regarding the problem of logic. Cupitt began his argumentation by analysing the statement that Jesus is God. Apart from analysis of the words ‘Jesus’ and ‘God’ he focused on the verb ‘is’ in a special way and proposed three ways of interpreting it in the christological context: ‘is’ can mean identification, predication or acclamation. The case of predication, when divinity is ‘predicated’ to the man Jesus, is central for Cupitt, and he points out that he sees here an irresolvable problem, because for him such ‘predication’ in an inevitable way merges with ‘identification’. So the conclusion is that such a statement is wrong in both its form and its contents and the following definition of Jesus Christ is proposed: ‘Jesus, in short, was a prophet who brought the tradition of prophetic monotheism to completion’<sup>32</sup> and his main function is in playing the perennial role in fulfilling God’s purpose of salvation. Although the path of proving is now different from the one used in “The Myth of God”, it is quite remarkable that the conclusion stays basically the same and unaffected by all the critique. It can be even argued that such a view on Jesus Christ and the incarnation as held by Cupitt is more of a faith position, then a theory or an academic statement open to discussion and alteration, when necessary.

Nicholas Lash’s critique on this article by Cupitt makes a special remark of his oversimplified account of the problem of co-existence of the divine and the human in Jesus Christ and indicates Cupitt’s highly arguable presentation of what the actual verb

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<sup>31</sup> *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, 25-26.

<sup>32</sup> *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, 39.

'is' might mean as a crucial part of the affirmation. Brian Hebblethwaite also criticises Cupitt's position and claims that in kenotic Christology 'it is a travesty to suggest that... divinity is predicated of Jesus' humanity'<sup>33</sup>. God-talk becomes a man-talk and the picture of Jesus is highly anthropomorphic in this case and indeed it falls prey to the critique, which has been widely used since the time of the first Christological heresies and has been very sufficient in drawing a clear line what is still permissible to claim without being cast out of the Church.

Another issue which did not get enough attention in "The Myth of God", but which was thoroughly discussed in "Incarnation and Myth", is that of the place incarnation has within Christianity and of the actual necessity of the doctrine of incarnation for Christian belief. Hick's article "Incarnation and Atonement: Evil and Incarnation" considers two issues: estimating the religious 'value' of the doctrine of incarnation in the light of the atonement, and the matter of the incarnation being a mere self-contradiction.

Hick does not see any point in why God, who has perfect knowledge of his people, should have become one of them and how He could undergo such a humiliation, the suffering and death of Christ, without ceasing to be the same omnipotent and impassable God. Hick also criticises the Christian affirmation that the incarnation took place only once and in particular historical circumstances – for him the incarnation, being understood as a means of God's revelation and transforming action to people, could just as well happen some other time and in some other place for the sake of salvation of other sections of mankind. And as for him not a single Christian school has provided a viable account of revelation, Hick concludes that it is a sheer contradiction and should remain in Christianity only as a powerful metaphor of God's redeeming work<sup>34</sup>.

Moule's comment<sup>35</sup> on this article by Hick answers back in the way of direct quotation from the text of the article and arguing that the bold affirmations, made by Hick, cannot be proved on the biblical basis and do not so bluntly necessarily lead towards a docetic view on the incarnation Hick tried to impose. Hebblethwaite's critical contribution on the same issue provides a wider scope as he is trying to pinpoint the moral and religious view on incarnation. Based on the kenotic axiom that it is God who

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<sup>33</sup> *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, 60.

<sup>34</sup> *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, 83-84.

<sup>35</sup> Moule, *Incarnation and Atonement: A Comment on Professor Hick's Critique of Atonement Doctrine in Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, 85-86.

is always the subject of all Christological statements and that it would be 'to confuse the natures by predicating unlimited divinity of the man instead of predicating real humanity of God incarnate'<sup>36</sup>, he carries on to criticise Goulden's, Cupitt's and Nineham's attempts of constructing non-incarnational Christology on the basis that following a purely theistic idiom, the authors seemed to lose what was specifically Christian and what could not be reduced to a mere religious experience.

Hebblethwaite also names some important implications of the incarnation, which are vital for Christian belief and Christian life. First of all, incarnation provided an absolutely new possibility of attaining knowledge about God and achieving union with Him. Being an organic part of the Trinitarian parlance, the incarnation, as Hebblethwaite puts it, is actualised in every present moment of worshipping and knowing God. Through the humanity of Christ people are able to take part in the movement of all creation to the final reconciliation with God, and the human role here is of vital importance. This also provides a theological insight, which is specifically Christian by nature and cannot be replaced by a theocentric perspective on the incarnation. Another implication of the incarnation confronting world evil, sin and suffering is morally viable and credible, only if it was 'for real', in the most physical sense, and not being put in terms of the God's awareness of evil or sympathy to men. Hebblethwaite's target here is to show the insufficiency of the non-incarnational model of Christianity from both moral and religious points of view.

Such important issues as the knowledge of God, the relevance of the incarnation to the present sacramental and spiritual experience and the fact that they are actually rooted in the incarnation get further discussion in the article "The Incarnation as the Foundation of the Church" by Stephen Sykes. Several main points here deserve to be noticed. First of all, Sykes challenges the view that there is the traditional incarnational belief and argues that incarnation in the Church rather took the form of a story; and the importance of a story consists in the fact that by means of stories of different kind human identity gets patterned<sup>37</sup>. Incarnational doctrine and incarnational theology are thus defined as a number of ways to express the central point of God's desire to identify himself with the human condition in the most intimate way, which cannot be attained in any other way.

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<sup>36</sup> Moule, *Incarnation and Atonement*, 90.

<sup>37</sup> *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, 115-125.

From the point that the incarnation is a unique source of the knowledge of God, Sykes goes a step further and claims that it is also the basis of the knowledge of others and of oneself. Human relations are thus understood in terms of mutual love and trust, reflecting God's love to his people. The versatile character of the relationships between people and the many possibilities of seeing and estimating oneself find their counterpart in the diversity of the accounts of God in the Scriptures. Such usage of the Scriptures is legitimised by the Church (a trait, still regarded as characteristic to the Reformed Churches) and builds a link to speaking about the Church as a keeper and constant reminder of the story of the incarnation. Sykes seeks not to refute step by step what the contributors of "The Myth of God" were trying to validate, but rather to indicate what should be taken as a necessary base in the attempt to reconstruct a positive account of the living incarnational faith of the Church. As human relations are most true to themselves when they follow the pattern of mutual love movement within the Trinity, so the Church as a recollector of the story of the incarnation becomes its fulfilment in the mystery of eucharist, where it is also most true to its identity. That is what Sykes bears in mind when he claims that his object was to take an Anglican position in his theological exercise and that so 'to take an Anglican stance... means...[that] speaking of the church and speaking of Christ are different formulations of the same subject matter',<sup>38</sup>.

A valuable contribution to the general discussion was also made by John Rodwell in his two articles "Myth and Truth in Scientific Enquiry" and "Relativism in Science and Theology". He acknowledges the necessity and importance of using certain models while speaking about God and his incarnation, at the same time considering the issue of the truth which can be attributed to any model in general and the criteria of its verification, or rather, basing on Karl Popper's ideas, of its falsification. Besides Popper, Rodwell also uses the concept of 'paradigm', introduced by Thomas Kuhn, in order to break the vicious circle of relativism when we discuss the cultural gap between modern man and past generations. In his quest for the common philosophical ground, which would have enabled a positive debate, Rodwell calls attention to the argument itself, to see if it is formulated in the right and accurate way.

These more philosophic discussion aimed first of all to serve as the basis for a serious discussion in order to affirm that the incarnation and the form in which it was

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<sup>38</sup> *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, 119.



conveyed to us are still relevant and reliable enough to form a firm belief of a modern man, and that it is a treasure handed down the ages which still has much to say to us in a unique way, which is a natural outcome of the unique event of God's incarnation in his Son Jesus Christ.

How then is the attitude of the Church defined towards the 'trouble-makers' who compiled "The Myth of God Incarnate"? Only Brian Hebblethwaite in his article "*The Myth and Christian Faith*" felt himself urged to articulate his position to the point whether the authors could still be regarded as Christians. His position can be characterised as a moderate criticism. While admitting a certain degree of freedom in theological disputes, Hebblethwaite reminds us that the Church as a corporate institution has its permissive limits as far as the contents of the Christian faith is concerned. One of the Church's tasks is to teach the matters of faith, and thus it would be quite a shaky position to claim that the Church has been mistaken in maintaining and teaching such a core issue, as the incarnation. Making no reference to the question of Church discipline, Hebblethwaite nevertheless makes it clear that 'the fact that a number of Christian theologians no longer subscribe to the Christian doctrines of the incarnation and the Trinity should not deflect the church, through its bishops, its councils and its liturgies, from teaching and commending its trinitarian and incarnational faith'<sup>39</sup>. In fact nothing is mentioned about any possible benefit that the Church of England can get as an outcome of this debate – on the contrary, it is recommended that it should stay true to its incarnational faith both in dogmatic questions and what is more important, in its worship and practice.

As far as theological or philosophical conclusions from the debate are concerned, they were drawn together by Basil Mitchell in a summing-up, but although it tackles several important issues (e.g. the understanding of human nature in the light of the incarnation, the question of religious language, etc) it could not name any significant attempt to construct a non-incarnational Christology or to show the futile character of such an enterprise, which would be recognised by the both sides of the debate. Much of the critique on the positions of the authors of "The Myth of God Incarnate" is certainly done in a very accurate way and indicates a wide scope of philosophical, theological and moral implications that should be taken into account while discussing such a crucial doctrine for Christian faith. Some authors used kenotic Christology and proved its

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<sup>39</sup> *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, 16.



relevance and creative resources in modern discussions. But at the same time the majority of the contributors to “The Myth of God” retained their arguments and did little to adjust their position in order to answer the critique. There can be different accounts of how dogmatic the authors of “The Myth of God” are themselves, but probably, Nicholas Lash’s complaint on the failure of imagination they showed with regard to the assessment of traditional christological models can be referred to the whole argument: ‘on the one hand, a failure to hear the questions to which the christological languages of the past were forms of response and, on the other hand, an insufficiently self-critical ‘hearing’ of the way in which those same questions confront us and challenge us today’<sup>40</sup>.

The whole debate cannot be considered futile or needless as it succeeded eventually in making a number of theologians rethink a seemingly traditional perception of the incarnation, its role within Christianity and the importance of its implications for Christian anthropology, soteriology and the usage of cognitive models for expressing Christian message. But the sheer fact that several of the Church of England leading theologians regarded themselves unable to maintain Church teaching in such a central topic as the doctrine of the incarnation, and moreover, the virtual inability of the Church as a whole to provide a sound critique at first or a sound expounding of its position<sup>41</sup> makes it rather problematic to evaluate the effect caused by “The Myth of God Incarnate” other than negatively. Although very liberal and quite reluctant to air its dogmatic grounds, the Church of England again, as after the publication of “Honest to God”, faced the necessity of exploring and giving a sound wording to issues of systematic theology.

### ***b) The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England.***

It is not the task of the present chapter to give a full or a very detailed account of the Charismatic movement. Its origins and similarities with other movements of renewal, either separate from the established denominations, as the Pentecostals, or springing in the traditional churches, such as the Cursillo movement, are also beyond the scope. It is done in order to consider solely the question whether specific Charismatic features and the Charismatic theology are in fact hostile to the traditional

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<sup>40</sup> *Incarnation and Myth: The Debate Continued*, 231.

<sup>41</sup> It seems to be quite remarkable that virtually no debate on “The Myth of God Incarnate” took place in the General Synod.

Trinitarian faith of the Church, more precisely the Church of England as it has been from the 1960s till the present day.

Speaking about the Charismatics at once reminds us about the notion of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the exercising of them, and not of some particular theology, which would be different from what the Church teaches. Whereas the publication of "The Myth of God Incarnate" was designed to dispute over the matters of theology *per se* and all the arguments belonged to the sphere of *ratio*, the Charismatics stressed the importance of experience for the Christian life. This experience was seen as given by God through His Spirit and was manifested in a variety of ways: baptism in the Spirit, speaking in tongues, healing, prophesying, etc. Those gifts of the Spirit would be either both eagerly anticipated and welcomed by those involved in the Charismatic movement, or hotly rebuked by their critics. The critique in its classical form is made from the position of Protestant cessationism<sup>42</sup>. According to cessationists all the gifts of the Spirit, or charismata, died out with the first generation of apostles and preachers, when they performed the function of establishing and strengthening the primitive church. As an example, which cannot be repeated, were taken the miracles performed by Jesus Christ himself.

On the contrary, the Charismatics produced numerous evidences that miracles are still possible in the modern world, and some of them were even claimed that the baptism in the Spirit and other gifts are part and parcel of living a truly Christian life. As the result those who lacked such an experience were seen as lacking the true participation in Christian faith. M. Turner criticises both the exclusivist views of the extreme Charismatics and the cessationists' doubts about validity of the gifts and proves that the spiritual gifts as they are recorded in the New Testament are not unique to Charismatic form of Christianity<sup>43</sup>. He also goes to some lengths to prove that the position that the gifts of the Spirit should always accompany post-conversion crisis experience is not viable as well. Such a position implies that after the baptism with water there should follow the baptism in Spirit and undermines traditional Christianity and those Christians who are unable to undergo such an experience.

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<sup>42</sup> For example, see Turner, M., *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 278ff.

<sup>43</sup> Turner, M., *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now*, 337ff

But it goes without saying that both the popular view on the Charismatics links them with exercising of the gifts and also that the Charismatics themselves value the gifts (especially speaking in tongues) highly.

The early days of the Charismatic movement saw few theologians who would provide a systematic review of the theology underlying this movement. As with any new experience, conceptualisation and evaluation took time. But as a preliminary remark it should be noted that even these days there is hardly such a phenomenon as one Charismatic theology. One should better speak about a number of theologies, especially because Britain was influenced by several different Charismatic trends from abroad (for instance, Toronto Blessing or J. Wimber's Vineyard). At the same time there is a certain agenda of ideas and practices that most of the Charismatics share, and although even the term 'Charismatic renewal' itself is not clearly defined<sup>44</sup>, no one can deny that such a phenomenon has existed since the 1960s in the Church of England. That is why it is also possible to consider Charismatic theology as it was forged or adapted within the Church of England.

Not only Charismatic theology was slow to emerge. The reaction of the Church of England to this new trend also took considerable time to be put down in the form of the Report "The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England" (1981), edited by Colin Craston. More precisely, it took seventeen years since the outburst of speaking in tongues in St Mark's, Gillingham, St Mark's, Cheltenham and St Paul's, Beckenham in 1962-64. The 65-page Report primarily served to give a brief outline of the history of the Charismatic movement and its specific features, plus to raise the questions of its origins and to give a blueprint of the evaluation of this movement.

Since then the matter of renewal and of the Charismatic movement appeared as an important topic in the agenda of the Church. In 1986 was published the research by J. Bax "The Good Wine" on the broader context of renewal in the Church of England with its main interest on the Charismatic movement, the Cursillo movement, different forms of spiritual quest and the House Churches. In 1987 there came one more Report "Open to Spirit: Anglicans and the Experience of Renewal", edited by C. Cranston. This Report gave a broader scope to the Charismatic movement within the Anglican community and among contributors were not only British but also church leaders from Southern Africa, Australia, Brazil, Canada and the USA. It is also dedicated to a more

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<sup>44</sup> *The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England*, (London: CIO Publishing, 1981), 1.

general question of spiritual renewal in the Church, but it was launched by the debates in General Synod on the Charismatics and their role in the Church of England. But it was only in 1991 that the Doctrine Commission produced the Report on the theology of the Holy Spirit "We Believe in the Holy Spirit", which is considered in a great detail in a separate chapter below.

That is basically the background and sources of reference to turn to while considering the major problem here. The central question is whether it is appropriate to claim that Charismatic theology is hostile to traditional Trinitarian doctrine or, on the contrary, are these two theologies compatible? Drawing the line a bit further can one also claim that if the Charismatic and 'traditional' theologies do not deny each other, then is it due to the Charismatic impetus that the Church of England articulated its doctrine of pneumatology?

Roughly speaking, the possible responses can be put in two groups: positive ones, which affirmed the desirability of including the Charismatic ethos into the life of the whole church and indicated mutual merits; and those responses that aired certain concerns, ranging from evaluative statements to a sharp critique.

The Report "The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England" rightly indicated possible dangers in the biblical interpretation from the Charismatic stance. The text of the Bible, apart from being understood as the story of God's dealings with His people and of His purpose, at times performed the function of direct and authoritative guidance now and in the momentary context. Thus there occurs a real chance, to a high degree, of subjectivity in interpreting the Bible and one's own experiences. The biblical language is still a part of the cultural heritage for the worshippers, but now much more freedom (not always free of ignorance) is allowed. The Report warns that some of the Charismatics 'for all their address to the Son and to the Spirit, are only Trinitarian by *accident* – they happen to have gained their new and normative *experience of God* within a Trinitarian tradition'<sup>45</sup>. In other words, subjective experience (an authority in itself) together with bad exegesis can lead to going astray from the Trinitarian position and become a point of acute conflict in future. But at the same time the Report claims that for some people Trinitarian theology used to be only an intellectual conundrum, whereas the Charismatic movement brought with it a real

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<sup>45</sup> *The Charismatic Movement in the Church of England*, 38.

experience of the Triune God, which had a refreshing and positive effect on the living the Christian faith.

Another example of the critique on the Charismatic theology is provided by Tom Smail, Andrew Walker and Nigel Wright in their book “Charismatic Renewal” (1995). Their critique was aimed at Faith Movement theology and regards its very peculiar understanding of the Trinity. To put it briefly, the source of all healing and the origin of all illnesses alike belong to the realm of the spirit, not the body. The realm of the body, of this world, is seen as the property of Satan. Thus, in order to give people the chance to be healed, Jesus Christ had to die twice – first of all, spiritually and then physically. The emphasis on this warfare of God and Satan where Satan is seen as having his rights on the earth and as being almost an equal adversary to God is typical of several trends of the Charismatic movement (for instance, John Wimber and Vineyard). But such a viewpoint leaves the question if the Trinity became a binary unity, at least temporarily, when Jesus Christ died on the cross. Also the Holy Spirit is at danger of being depicted as merely the power of God, and not the Third Person of the coequal Trinity<sup>46</sup>.

The authors also aimed at giving an overall comment on the interrelation between the Trinitarian doctrine and Charismatic reconstructions. Their conclusion is that the living faith is sustained by the power of intra-trinitarian relationships (‘for the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father who comes to us in the ministry of the Son’<sup>47</sup>) and the works of the Spirit cannot be separated from the whole work that God is doing in the world. It should be also noted that this publication is in fact highly polemical and does not provide a wider scope of Charismatic views, expressed either in worship or by the means of theology, including those of the Charismatics in the Church of England.

There is a big number of positive reactions to the Charismatic movement or the Charismatic ethos in general, but for the purpose of my task, I will consider only those that take account of the specifically Charismatic theological statements, and not only appraise the gifts of the Spirit.

The most up to date and comprehensive study of the spiritual gifts at times of the New Testament and in our days has been provided by Max Turner in his book “The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now” (1996, revised edition 1999). He considers Pentecost and the outpouring of the Spirit as the actual basis for the

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<sup>46</sup> Smail Tom, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright *Charismatic Renewal* (London: SPCK, 1995), 143ff.

<sup>47</sup> Smail Tom, Andrew Walker, and Nigel Wright *Charismatic Renewal*, 165.



Trinitarian faith. Pneumatology for him can be only trinitarian<sup>48</sup>. His argument, if put in a nutshell, says that while in Judaism the Spirit can be sent only by Yahweh, in the New Testament Jesus claims to send the Spirit as well. Thus, such a claim should be regarded as the ultimately divine function; hence the trinitarian pneumatology provides a firm basis for high Christology. At the same time, as Jesus could not send his Father, the Spirit should be discerned separately from the Father and not only as His attribute. So, the breach with traditional Judaism took place and Yahweh of Judaism is replaced and overcome by the Triune Godhead of Christianity in the revelation of God in His Son Jesus Christ. Although it is not clear how precisely the authors of the New Testament realised the trinitarian nature of the Pentecost, but Turner indicates that only the trinitarian implications of the outpouring of the Spirit can give a relevant basis for the concept of the Christian God as Living God in Three Persons and prevent slipping into largely functional binitarianist account.

N. Scotland in his book “The Charismatics and the Next Millennium” (London, 1995) also states that the Charismatic theology gives a positive impact on renewed understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity<sup>49</sup>. Scotland stresses that the model of God as Three Persons in mutual relationships gives a new insight for the idea of the Church and that the Charismatics know it as a reality given in their experience of God. He does not say whether all the Charismatic experience has a firm trinitarian basis, but surely seeks to secure a healthy foundation for the understanding of the Church’s nature.

An interesting attempt to reconcile Charismatic and Trinitarian theology, particularly in a Church of England context, is undertaken by M. Cartledge<sup>50</sup>. His movement of thought takes another starting point: he attempts to give an account of the Trinitarian faith from the Charismatic point of view. The doctrine of the Trinity is for him the best example of the Christian dogma which is both pivotal for Christianity and also institutionalised. Cartledge aims to have this example as a springboard and read the institution of the Church of England in general in terms of charisma. The final synthesis could be called ‘a charismatic-trinitarian via media’<sup>51</sup>.

<sup>48</sup> Turner, M., *The Holy Spirit and Spiritual Gifts: Then and Now* (Carlisle: Paternoster Press, 1999), 166-176.

<sup>49</sup> Scotland, N., *The Charismatics and the Next Millennium* (London: Hoddon & Stoughton, 1995), 261-263.

<sup>50</sup> Cartledge Mark, *A New Via Media: The Charismatics and the Church of England in the Twenty-First Century* in ANVIL, Vol. 17, No 4 (2000), 271-283.

<sup>51</sup> Cartledge M, *A New Via Media*, 281.

The role of the Holy Spirit in Cartledge's analysis is seen not separately, but as being interwoven into the mutual inter-relatedness and love within the Holy Trinity. Although non-discernable by means of the human cognition, this concept leads to several functional implications: the Trinitarian theology suggests (in Cartledge's terms<sup>52</sup>) a *charisma* of community with its implications for innovation and tradition in the Church; a *charisma* of worship when the praise is directed through the intercession of the Son and by means of the Holy Spirit to God the Father; a *charisma* of trinitarian language, which has already been anticipated by the three authors of "Charismatic Renewal" in their account of the Trinitarian doctrine and the Charismatics; and finally, a *charisma* of salvation (the activity of God which accomplishes the achievement of the ultimate goal of salvation). The last point certainly deserves more attention among the Charismatics, because it is often overlooked in searching for signs and miracles here and now, which role the Spirit plays on the last day and in the New Creation.

As a conclusion two points are to be made. First of all, in posing and answering the question concerning Charismatic theology more attention should be paid to the language and theology underlying Charismatic worship, especially when the Charismatics began to evaluate Eucharistic and sacramental spirituality (approach, undertaken by M. Cartledge, N. Scotland, J. Fletcher and C. Cocksworth "The Spirit and Liturgy", Cambridge, 1998). Any renewal is in its core about our new relationships to God, which is reflected in the worship first and foremost.

Secondly, the vast part of Charismatic theology in its proper sense occurred only after 1992, and naturally took into account the reaction of the Church of England to the movement. However, as the main objective is to trace the official response of the Church of England to the Charismatic movement, here it is still inevitable to remain bound to the Doctrine Commission statement "We Believe in the Holy Spirit", published in 1991. That is why it is not really appropriate to try to reconstruct the Church of England perspective on the Charismatic movement, based on the dated sources. However, it is still possible to use this knowledge as the background which can provide valuable insights into the origins of the Church of England's recent teaching of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit.

It would be an oversimplification to say that Charismatic theology was a lethal threat to the traditional Anglican doctrine of the Trinity, but at the same time regardless

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<sup>52</sup> Here M. Cartledge follows M. Turner who defined *charisma* as '(gracious) gift', rather than Max Weber.

of all the useful insights the Charismatics can provide for the understanding of the doctrine of the Holy Spirit, the Charismatic theology (especially implicit, often as an interpretation of a particular experience) was a certain challenge for the Church of England. It would be right to speak about a 'rediscovery' of the Spirit in the Church, which followed such rediscovery probably in a more dramatic way in the Charismatic renewal. And the main analysis is focused on the Doctrine Commission Report "We Believe in the Holy Spirit".

### ***c) We Believe in God. A Report by the Doctrine Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England.***

"We believe in God" is not only a paraphrase of the first clause of the Creed; it is the profession of faith in itself. But even such a short sentence seems to evoke numerous questions: should we be satisfied with 'we believe' as a multiplication of a certain number of 'I believe'? And even if we start with the fact of believing in the Christian God, and not with a mere presumption of a certain epistemological or psychological phenomenon labelled with this name, could we be sure that we know what we are talking about, to be sure that we know God?

The obvious answer to both questions is certainly 'no'. Of course, those who believe in God are based on their own experience of the 'encounter-and-response' situation, which means that there could be lack of such an experience. But both the origins and the nature of Christian faith are corporate, as it has been argued in previous Doctrine Report "Believing in the Church" (1981). Strangely enough, what is seen as the most intimate and private notion turns out to be a shared property. Christian faith 'is the fruit of the faithful response and search of communities as much as of the internal illumination and wrestling of individuals'<sup>53</sup>. Hence, the aim of the Report is twofold: as far as individuals are concerned, it is appropriate to turn to the realm of individual experience, but if we turn to the Christian tradition, we should analyse how this experience is mediated through common Church heritage, disclosed in the Scriptures, the creeds and the order of liturgy. These two layers of analysis can be separated only for the sake of methodology, but when we turn to a single phenomenon, such as the language people use for speaking about God, both of these layers contribute to the overall understanding of the subject. One should be aware that there is always a certain

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<sup>53</sup> Church of England, Doctrine Commission of the General Synod, *We Believe in God* (London, Church House Publishing, 1987), 2.

threat to overestimate one of the sides, but it is not the task of this Report to redress the balance in such a case. The objective of this Report is not only to show that the traditional formulas of Christianity are still relevant today, but also to try to construct a doctrine of God, to give a definition, what (more precisely, who) God is and who He is for us.

From Dionysius Areopagite onwards, there are two ways of getting to ‘know God’: either *via negativa* when we agree that our language is too poor to express anything of God’s glory and His nature (the Book of Job is one of the most vivid examples), or *via positiva*<sup>54</sup> when we still try to say something about our experience of God’s presence, using words like ‘Omnipotence’ or ‘Almighty’. As this Report puts the primary stress on the positive way of speaking about God (and to God – theology/θεολογία-λογος), it seems worthwhile to discuss the basis of such an approach.

First of all, it is based on the experience of individuals who praise God, pray to Him and gather daily or weekly to worship Him. On the other hand, as it has already been stated, there is no ‘I believe’ as such, but only ‘We believe’; thus, we turn to all Church heritage which the Christians share all over the world. In the case of the Church of England the basics for us are Scripture, experience and the role of Reason. All these basics are the means of expressing corporate believing and are shared, ‘lived through’ and being shaped by the community as a whole and by every single member of it as well. Still, discussing people’s longings for God and the means by which they are trying to achieve knowledge about Him, we should bear in mind that the question whether *via positiva* is adequate to its subject or not, will always stay open, even if we come to the view that it is God Himself who is the Subject, the Initiator and the Aim of this route of mental activity. Hence, certain tensions are inevitable, but as we are aware of them, it will not get us into the vicious circle of defining and redefining human language or concepts of mind in the light of revelation.

The role of the Scripture will be discussed a bit later, in the analysis of Chapters 4-6, but now let us turn to the presumptions of the possibility of knowing God that the Doctrine Commission held: the basic assumption of rational Christian theology is that ‘God will not violate human categories of thought’<sup>55</sup>. This is not the only way of comprehending this problem. Even within Christianity certain schools of thought (for instance, Mysticism) would not agree with that and would argue that this statement

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<sup>54</sup> In Eastern tradition we speak about two approaches: *αποφατικός* (negative) and *καταφατικός* (positive).

<sup>55</sup> *We Believe in God*, 6.



traces back as far as the Enlightenment period. For us it is important that in the Report under consideration the role of human reason is regarded as crucial. And Reason actually takes up a role of making judgements on faith in modern Western world: it demands, 'That the truths it asserts should be compatible with other truths, derived from observation'<sup>56</sup>. In other words, we live in a scientific age and it makes its claims on us and on what we regard as being true for us. A believer has to make it clear for himself, that it is so, and that the only way out from this situation is to realise that Christian truth in its contents claims to be eternal, ultimately important and always 'up-to-date', however culturally dependant the exact form of its communication could be. A strong foundation of faith is necessary not only in the question of this reason and faith interaction, but also while depicting the variety of religious experience people possess, and in the situation when they seek the meaning of their lives far away from what they care about in daily routine, and last but not least, there is a need to claim one's profession of faith in the modern situation of religious plurality. The multitude of existing religions does not mean that Christianity should adopt everything that seems to be attractive in other traditions, but Christianity should take up the challenge of being involved in this competition of faiths by recharging its claims to be the way to salvation and restoration of the creation.

What is really important, is that the Church seems to be fully aware of all the constraints and controversies of the contemporary situation and that it still claims to be the living Body of God who is the Ultimate Reality and the Ground of Being, and it claims to know Him through Scripture and the tradition of the Christian catholic Church. It also means that there is a strict distinction between the area of sciences and the realm of the Church: at least, nobody now would write an apology for the Scripture against scientific data, regarding the Bible as a purely scientific piece of work.

The Chapter "God and our Ways of Knowing" also deals with the problem of the possibility of achieving some ultimately true knowledge both in the sciences which are claimed to be the most reliable sphere of human knowledge, and in religions which claim to be true but admit that the rational approach and even human language as a human invention fail to express God or His qualities. The fundamental difference is that the science aims to overcome its inaccuracy by providing more and more sophisticated theories (but no scientific theory can explain all the Universe, it has to be sharply

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<sup>56</sup> *We Believe in God*, 7.



defined in its area of application). Religions, on the contrary, claim to have truth of ultimate importance for every person, dead or alive, but they argue that there could be no complete definition of God, of His own nature. This is the reason we witness similar notions in different religious traditions in West and East: ‘the *via negativa* of Christianity; the *En Sof* of Judaism; the *bila kaif* of Islam; the *ik onkar* of Sikhism; the *neti, neti* of Hinduism’<sup>57</sup>. The ‘*neti, neti*’ of Hinduism is especially characteristic – God is literally ‘not this, not this’; there are no concepts in any human language that would make sense if we try to apply them to God.

This fact allows the members of the Commission to conclude that if God cannot be by nature precisely defined, then He cannot be subject to scientific criticism. That is true, but it is not God that modern science aims to criticise, it is the doctrine of God as it is manifested in the Church that has provoked numerous controversies. Such a position is always an argument of different worldviews, of different sets of beliefs, and as such it cannot end in the rational defeat of one of the opponents, but only in conversion. What this Report really aims to achieve, is to show that still we can say that we have some knowledge of God, because ‘God is known by his acts’, and to witness that the traditional Christian good news about God is relevant for us, for this world we live in. It is a mode of life that is at stake, and not a system of statements, related to what is called religion.

In order to sum up this chapter of the Report, we draw attention to the fact that however transcendent, God at the same time can be observed, and we start from the human experience, which is the true origin of any theology. In order to bring out religious practice to the forefront, it was also claimed that theology is like science in some way, because theology too operates with several models of exploring the unknown, always aiming to place these models under trial of what is common in the Church. The analogy is evident: our behaviour and the laws of science are formed by the exact limit of possible interpretations, by a certain reliability of the sequence of natural phenomena. The same is expected to occur in the realm of theology: God is comprehended as One, as a Person who would not be a liar, who can be trusted and who demands absolute trust from an individual. As the sum of scientific formula and experiments form a paradigm, in the same way the corporate experience of believers forms the starting point for a doctrine. But it should be briefly stated that both samples

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<sup>57</sup> *We Believe in God*, 26.

of thought could be criticized equally, and pictured in such a way, they seem to be matters of faith. There is some truth that modern science can be regarded as a form of corporate belief, but this is the 'religion of agnostics', many of whom seek to ruin the traditional approaches. Whereas religion, especially Christianity, always appeals to some eternal and constant axioms. The question of their interpretation is secondary by nature, and from the times of St. Augustine the Church deals with the problem of hermeneutics and the interpretation of the Bible. To put it in a nutshell, however different the interpretation and the role of the Scripture in various Christian denominations might have been, the Scripture has always been the core of the Christian belief.

Before we turn to the doctrine of God as it is presented in the Scripture, let us return a pace back and see what are the implication of such an approach to knowledge about God to faith: first of all, God is not 'something', He is the One who makes an approach of love towards us, we become involved in this flow of love. Secondly, it is argued that there is no eternal set of some pictures of God which cannot possibly change and develop, and it means both that 'some of the pictures of God that have been imagined in the past may come to be discarded'<sup>58</sup> but some are still considered to be reliable exactly in the way scientific theories are, which are made adequate and reliable through a so called 'winnowing process'. More precisely, old images of God *must* be got rid of, in order to make way for new ones. The corollary is that as there can be no absolutely right notion of God, there is no absolutely wrong image or symbol or picture of God either, and we should have a good use of all our imagination and set of concepts. Thus, to escape relativism, 'we should live with the approximate, incomplete and corrigible nature of our languages, not as a defect, but as an asset'<sup>59</sup>. But another corollary could be also drawn: neither the scientific approach, nor scientific or poetical language fit absolutely the task and purpose of theology, and those who believe that theology can be written in the language of social novel or some other genre of fiction, are from being right, though the idea of substituting theology with pure narrative seems to be really appealing nowadays.

One more important point to mention is that theology is rooted in experience, which is of a very particular nature, because once given, it changes all the life of a believer. The question whether it is true or not cannot be answered straightforwardly,

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<sup>58</sup> *We Believe in God*, 29.

<sup>59</sup> *We Believe in God*, 31.

but one of the most secure criteria is to check this experience by means of devotion, both individual and corporate, otherwise we stay on the level of sheer individualism, even solipsism.

The central question of the Report is still of getting some knowledge about God, and that is why the Report turns to the actual sources of that knowledge, beginning with the image of God given in the Scripture. Three chapters of the Report are in fact dedicated to this matter: “The God of the Bible”, “The God of Jesus” and “The God of the Disciples”.

It is probably the most coherent and very well produced part of the Report, one may even claim that it is very didactic in a positive sense of the word, because these chapters teach and instruct how both the Old and New Testaments are relevant to our anticipation of God and they argue that the only way to know God is the way of love, where the stimulus and moving power is only God.

It seems to be really relevant to pay special attention only to the points where the significance of the biblical image is made explicit, otherwise the essay will turn out to be a mere recital of arranged material. First of all, ‘Scripture does occupy a uniquely authoritative position among the available sources of belief’<sup>60</sup> which presupposes a very high degree of trust and confidence that people put in the Scripture. Two main features of the Bible as a source of knowledge about God were commented upon specifically: the Bible’s origin in community, not in the creativity of a single author, and the narrative content of the Bible, which reveals not only what the Bible itself is for us, but also provide a glimpse on God and his nature. The narrative character of the Bible also means that in the Scripture we meet not just a story, but a very specific story, which is unique in its certain shape and makes our own lives included into the narrative, for its only main character – God himself, even for its predominantly male-oriented language (although there are examples of another attitude), but mostly for its end. It is not a story we used to listen to in the childhood ending with traditional ‘and they lived happily ever after’, but another type of the narrative that has its inevitable end clearly manifested through Jesus Christ Our Lord. Although we still live this side of the eschaton (εσχατον), the time of judgement (καιρος) is already there and is anticipated in every liturgy.

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<sup>60</sup> *We Believe in God*, 51.

Certainly it is the image of Jesus that unites the Old and the New Testament, Jesus the Lord as the fulfilment of the prophecies, the Messiah for the Jews and the Light for the Gentiles. And Jesus is also perceived as the continuation of the idea of God that is to be found in the Old Testament. The Chapter “The God of Jesus” claims that there are several themes in the Old Testament that were very stable through all the history of Israel: the God of the Old Testament is always personal, He is praised as a shepherd of His people, a king or a husband, sometimes a potter or a parent of Israel; God is always involved in his creation as a source of its becoming from nothing and maintaining in order; He is Holy, *ganz anders* (absolutely other) and at the same time the Giver of Moral Law to his people; finally, He is One, which is recorded in the first of the Ten Commandments. ‘Yahweh our God, Yahweh one’ (Deut. 6.4), who took his people from Egypt and will bring them salvation. That is the covenant through which the holy and absolutely transcendent God became involved, and thus known, in the history of one nation. The same chapter points out, that although there is at times a tendency to personify the Divine attributes, such as the Spirit of Yahweh that speaks through the prophets (1 Kings 22.24)<sup>61</sup> and the Wisdom of God, and it is tempting to regard the main evil angelic spirit as an up to a certain time equal adversary of God, but still the whole Old Testament is the evidence that God has no match and cannot have a truly equal adversary.

Thus, Jesus cannot be depicted only as an extension of the Spirit of God or his Wisdom; He is God Himself. But Jesus was the self-revelation of Godhead to His people, and as such He was long awaited; there are certain features and anticipations regarding Him that could be enumerated here: Jesus proclaimed the Law and He became the embodiment of the Law in His obedience to the Father; Jesus supported another source of knowledge of God which are the visionary experiences, He was the fulfilment of the Old Testament visionary prophecies and their true meaning; Jesus was the longed for Messiah; and finally, Jesus was close to the teaching of the Pharisees, who professed the resurrection of the dead. Thus, God Himself became the true source of Him for His people, the only gate of knowledge and wisdom.

Without getting rid of the Law, Jesus showed another deeper dimension of comprehending God – through His own Father-Son relation He made all His adherents sons of God, He brought them into the same relationship. That is how the transcendent

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<sup>61</sup> *We Believe in God*, 76.



God became revealed to the full extent. To sum up, let us quote the conclusion of this Chapter, which says, 'the God of Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, personally involved in his creation, holy and one. In him justice and love are held together. His ultimate triumph over evil is sure. Through his Spirit he is the author of all zeal for goodness in humankind. His ears are open to the prayers of his servants, who can speak to him in their hearts'<sup>62</sup>.

Jesus' personal relationship with the Father cannot be regarded separately from his message, and both contributed to a new dimension of the understanding of God, which is found in Jesus' disciples and later on, throughout the Christian Church. To put it in the form of a definition, 'Jesus is the human face of God, and to see him is to see the Father (John 14.9)'<sup>63</sup>, 'the preaching, healing, loving, suffering Jesus...., as the Word made flesh, has made God known (John 1.18)'<sup>64</sup>. Thus, Jesus Christ is the only adequate and full expression of God, a mystery which remained a mystery, but lived and died among people and thus was revealed, to a full extent through Christ's resurrection and victory over death as the major enemy and the most horrible consequence of Adam's fall. Jesus is the new Adam, and his death and resurrection became new life for a man and the whole creation.

Jesus is often compared to a Divine Wisdom to point his eternal being and his activity in the creation, but more often He is described as the God's Word (the Gospel of John) or as the image of God (Pauline writings) – in order to pinpoint that Jesus is the new way of getting to know God and that Jesus, while open to people, still remains God who exists before the beginning of time and as such cannot be fully comprehended. Jesus is the right way and not a dead formula of eternal truth. The same is right about the Third Person of the Trinity, which is the Holy Spirit which makes Christian faith and Christian Church possible and firm. In short, Jesus' coming and incarnation 'brought a new realization of God's accessibility, a recognition of his entrance into human suffering and of his relationship to his people, and at the same time a new estimate of the persons of Christ and of the Spirit in relation to God himself'<sup>65</sup>. And we can justly add: 'a new estimate of the degree of possibility to know God and his nature'.

The New Testament is a profound attempt to recognise and interpret this unique experience, epitomised in the figure of Christ and it is a starting point for the overall

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<sup>62</sup> *We Believe in God*, 85.

<sup>63</sup> *We Believe in God*, 96.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> *We Believe in God*, 101.



theological tradition which followed. Theology is supposed to be rational, as far as it is possible, but its origins lay in God's love to His creation and His self-disclosure.

A very interesting approach to the problem of the Triune God is Chapter 7 of the Report, which is called "God as Trinity: An Approach through Prayer". In fact, the authors argue that the Western Church has claimed to be monotheistic too often at the expense of trinitarianism. And while most people could claim that they were the followers of Christ, not many could articulate the core of the doctrine of Trinity. There occurred a certain gap between theology, which claimed God to be triune, and personal piety, which rather focused on the Second Person of the Trinity. What this chapter aims to do is to redress the balance to some extent by means of turning to personal experience and showing that in prayer the Three Persons act and reveal themselves inseparably. The phenomenon of prayer is a complex one. It has its not only rational, but also its emotional contents, at the same time it is the matter of personal will and sense of commitment as well. First of all, prayer in itself turns out to be a dialogue between a man and God, where God tries to contact a man, tries to 'pray him in', although at the outset the process of prayer seems to be a solely individual enterprise. The Divine response to the prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit within a man, and this response is not only a one-to-one interaction; a man gets drawn into inner dialogue between God the Holy Spirit and God the Father. It means that in this state of obedience, a person aims to repeat the way of Christ, to be 'in Christ' and to get 'Christ's mind'. Individual prayer becomes a locus of Divine dialogue and flow of mutual love, it goes beyond human understanding, and still it forms and transforms it to the knowledge of God. This point was made vivid in the early Church, when liturgy, preaching and prayers to Eucharist were regarded as the fruit of the Holy Spirit, which penetrated individual mind and made Himself evident through it. With the reference to the tradition of the Church, the chapter utters that 'it can at least be said that any genuine experience of Christian prayer involves an encounter with God perceived as in some sense triune'<sup>66</sup>. God is perceived as triune 'in some sense' because the threefold activity of God in us is distinct and united at the same time, which is a paradox, that can be fully comprehended and to some extent explained, as far as a paradox can be possibly explained, only in the prayer, when a man as a whole being becomes involved in the process of God's knowing. A person needs to be deified, to become Christ in

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<sup>66</sup> *We Believe in God*, 116.

order to participate in the divine dialogue, which unfolds inside of him. The initial response to the prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit, a deeper understanding is achieved through Jesus Christ, who is the image of the Father, and all three Persons act in mutual understanding and love – thus, an individual becomes involved not in some rationally paradoxical controversy in God, but in the nature of God, which is the core and the heart of Christian prayer.

The last two chapters of the Report – “God Known through Encounter and Response” and “The God in Whom We Trust” – deepen and broaden the insight that we cannot possibly get to know God as a mere subject, and it is not rational knowledge that God waits from us, but love, response to his call and obedience. God ‘can never for a moment be simply the object of our thought or our knowing or our believing. In some ways he is always the prompter of our search for him, the director of our speculation about him, the giver of our faith in him’<sup>67</sup>.

It is worth mentioning that the quotation speaks not about individual beliefs and experiences solely, but it includes individual phenomena in a broader framework of corporate believing. Thus, personal encounter with God is not violated, but enriched by the experience of the Christian community.

The main argument may be summarised as *Quantum Deus diligitur tantum cognoscitur*: ‘God is known in proportion as he is loved’<sup>68</sup>. And love to God and God’s love presuppose the call of God, which must be answered, and answered freely. It is always a matter of free will, whether to recognise God and respond to him in love and awe, or to close oneself to this message and ignore it. The highest degree of God’s love to man’s will is that God cannot violate it, he has to wait for a man to answer the call. Grace of God is impossible without the consent of man’s will, says the chapter.

And the adequate response from a man is obedience either in prayer or in service, or to the holy. The main point is that a man should be ready to place God’s intention prior to his own anticipations and hopes, thus even in case of ‘unanswered prayer’ an individual should make some effort to recognise that in silence the Spirit of God flows through him. It is a bitter experience that was known to Christ on the Calvary, and if a person believes in resurrection, such an experience becomes inevitable; it is a matter of ‘following Christ’. Thus, we know God by participating in a certain route of thinking, a flow of mutual love, and in certain patterns of behaviour.

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<sup>67</sup> *We Believe in God*, 122.

<sup>68</sup> *We Believe in God*, 123.

Love and knowledge form the will of a Christian, and this is not a separate sphere of knowledge about God, but the whole mode of life is proposed to a person to follow it freely.

‘We know God, so to speak, within the ‘doing’ of Jesus, and that knowledge requires of us a doing of God’s will by the same pattern. Thus to know is to do, and to do is to know, theologically what is indicative of God happened within the imperative of Jesus.’<sup>69</sup> It is hard to add something to this very true and concise statement. God’s grace is present in the whole creation, and if the creation agrees with the will of God, grace becomes evident. All the manifold experiences people have cannot be explained on their own basis, that is why people try to bring them to the Church (which is understood here even as a place, a building), in order to reconcile their experience with the experience of the Church, to make it validated. The Church of Christ and its Sacraments, especially the Eucharist, make it possible to speak about God in a positive way, although what has been discussed so far belongs more to the *via negativa*, because it cannot be properly defined and articulated by means of human language.

Thus we can conclude that even a no possible model of speaking about God can be appropriate, so that we can turn now to the experience of the Church, to its heritage and see, which ‘models’ of understanding were being used and if they are relevant to the world we live in, with all its problems and tragedies. The last chapter of the Report discusses images of God on the basis of the notion of God’s control over creation. Four models and different more detailed descriptions were provided, and all of them are found in the Scripture. We begin with the concept of the primacy of God over creation, of his Kingship, and we can witness either the image of God as a ‘philosopher-king’, whose will embraces everything and nothing can happen which is contrary to his eternal plan, or the image of the saviour-king, who admits the existence of something alien to his will. The problem of evil as the adversary of the will of God is closely related to the problem of fall, first of angels and then of man, which resulted in the Fall of the whole creation. God as Saviour is also the Sacrifice, but He is also the Judge, and both aspects must be met in Christian response to God, in cooperation of the Divine and human wills, when the will of God should be put in front of the human will and egoism.

As every model, the image of King is prone to interpretation, and as such is not the only possibility presented in the Bible. The next image is that of the Divine Creator,

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<sup>69</sup> *We Believe in God*, 136.

of an Artist. But if an artist is struggling with the material in order to give it a new form, God has nothing in creation to struggle with, because he created everything from nothing and the whole creation is obedient to his will. It is not the right place here to argue if the Fall and evil are also part of Divine plan or they are not, but it would be enough to say that however attractive, the model of an Artist tends to be too much anthropomorphic and as such, dangerous.

The same can be stated about the next offered model of God's understanding as a 'clockmaker'<sup>70</sup>. This model was very popular, because it promised to reconcile the 'traditional' image of God with scientific and 'modern'. This model is also known as Deism, and it has several varieties, all of them proved to be insufficient and prone to criticism.

The last image of God discussed is that of a parental love and child's obedience and reciprocal response of love. Here God is not alone; this is the model of mutual relationship, which finds its apex in the notion of love. Love of a parent is expressed through giving of a parental Law, and a child answers through his obedience to this law. Jesus is the example for people of total obedience, but what happens when a man disobeys, when he becomes 'a man out of age', using the term of Bonhoeffer? Even disobedient, a man is still a beloved child, and God's justice never ceases to be the labour of God's love as well.

God's love to his people is portrayed in the Old Testament as God's long-patience and faithfulness. In the New Testament we see another facet of God's love: God loves his creation so much, that he allowed his own begotten Son to suffer for us and to be dead, that we can have life eternal. Here this chapter tends to put primary stress on God's suffering for his creation and at times it seems to be almost Patripassianistic<sup>71</sup> position: 'if one suffers, then all suffer, or better, if God is in Christ is suffering for our redemption, then this is the sign and guarantee of the Triune God's eternal involvement in human suffering and human destiny'<sup>72</sup>. In order to indicate that God is involved in his creation like a parent is involved in the birth and whole life of the child, the authors declared God's suffering and God's changing, which is a shaky position, and which can be rightly criticised. The term 'a parent' is used here to indicate

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<sup>70</sup> *We Believe in God*, 153.

<sup>71</sup> A term used to refer to a form of Modalism or Monarchianism which, because it denies the distinction between Father and Son in the Trinity, maintains that God the Father suffered Christ's passion and death. From Komonchak, Joseph A., M. Collins, and D.A. Lane (eds.), *The New Dictionary of Theology* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1987)

<sup>72</sup> *We Believe in God*, 158-159.



that although traditionally regarded as male, the image of Christ and God the Father in the Scriptures can be interpreted as that of a loving tender mother. It is one more evidence that no interpretation can be finite and ultimately complete and true, due to the limits of our own language.

As a conclusion, the following passage on the Resurrection can be cited: 'The Resurrection does not cancel or merely redress the truth that shines from the cross; it confirms it. This is the eternal nature of divine power and victory, insofar as our human minds are capable of grasping it... That in which we put our trust is essentially the constancy and reliability of God; and this is, in fact, all the more solidly established through this understanding of his nature and his purpose'<sup>73</sup>.

In other words, in the Resurrection of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, God is made known for men. But not as another object we cope with in the reality. God can be comprehended only as a mystery – dimly, inadequately and approximately, to the extent our minds and we as beings could possibly comprehend the ground and meaning of the Universe and of us as well. Knowledge is inseparable from love and will, which is united in the concept of faith. The question 'How do we know God?' could be answered only 'We cannot know him as we can know things, but we believe in him as we believe and trust another person, and infinitely more.' It is not the question of some rational knowledge or of the area of epistemology; it is the question of a man as a whole. In order to answer what God is, we have to say what man is, and visa versa.

#### ***d) We Believe in the Holy Spirit. A Report by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England.***

Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his  
Son into our hearts, the Spirit that calls out  
'Abba, Father'. Gal. 4.6

It is a true mystery how the intratrinitarian relationships should be regarded all at once as soon as we aim to speak about the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, and the quotation above from the Epistle to the Galatians makes it clear. The Holy Trinity is One and Three, and numerous questions both on the theoretical level and in the area of experience (for instance, through prayer) were wonderfully tackled in the previous

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<sup>73</sup> *We Believe in God*, 161-162.



Report of the Doctrine Commission “We Believe in God” (1987). Here it seems to be sufficient for the purpose of the essay only to mention that there are two trends in the theology of the Holy Trinity, which are part and parcel of the Christian thought. On the one hand, *opera S. Trinitatis ad extra sunt indivisa* and thus, both individual religious experience and life of the whole Church witness that God is One and Three by nature. On the other hand, both Eastern and Western theologians have always claimed the unique character and role of every of the Three Persons (*hypostasis*), which cannot be possibly transferred to the others. Thus, God the Father is ‘Maker of heaven and earth’, and indeed the Nicene Creed supports and vindicates this division. However deliberately taken into account, this tension (the Church does not recognise it to be dichotomy here) brings to life a certain method and language of the Trinitarian theology and the authors of the Report seem to be quite aware of it.

It should be also stated from the outset that this Report concerning the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is the reaction of the Church of England to the charismatic movement, which saw its surge since the 1960s. The Report is neither solely apologetic for official Anglicanism, nor a mere critique of the Charismatics. The purpose of the Report seems to be twofold. First of all, it is an attempt to evaluate the charismatic experience and its possible contribution to the Church of England. The task is not only to point out what sort of experience the Charismatics have obtained but also to show the significance of placing the Holy Spirit in the centre of Christian life for ordinary believers. Second, the Report is a thorough investigation into the contents of the creedal clause, which says that the Holy Spirit is the Lord and the Giver of life. Similar to “We Believe in God” the current Report concentrates primarily on the actual contents of Christian belief, not on the nature of believing. The aim is to study attentively those general pneumatological trends that are to be found in the Scriptures and in the tradition of the Church and to show their relevance in modern situation.

The Report certainly argues with the Charismatics but it also recognises their positive sides. It seems to be fair to define the Report as an attempt to provide the Anglican doctrine of the Holy Spirit, although the authors themselves have not claimed such an objective. It seems also necessarily to mention that the whole text of the Report is unanimous, as well as of the previous one. A vivid succession of both texts can be easily traced, which supports the view on both Reports as doctrinal documents par excellence.

Before turning to the actual questions that were dealt with in “We Believe in the Holy Spirit”, it is reasonable to face the implications of the trinitarian belief in discussing the pneumatological doctrine. First and foremost, the view on the Holy Spirit is christocentric, and Chapter 4 “The Spirit of Jesus” is devoted to this, and this approach is designed not to violate Trinitarian dogma, but aims to supplement it. Then, the Report ponders the Christian life, which is understood as the state of being caught up into the threefold nature of God, based on the analysis of Paul’s Epistles. Third, the topic of the Holy Spirit’s eternal involvement into the order of creation and the world’s destiny. And finally, there is a separate issue of the Spirit’s work both within the Church, which is seen as his unfolding, and outside it. There are some more very interesting issues that have not been enumerated so far, but they will be given account of in due time. And one more very important point to mention: here one can find a very balanced approach to the actual experience, gathered and analysed over a long period of time. The authors are coherent in their claim that ‘in this book we shall speak a great deal about ‘experience of the Holy Spirit’, but this should not imply some kind of raw experience independent of the normal functioning of our human powers of understanding and interpretation in the light of tradition’<sup>74</sup>. Stress can be put either on the nature of human understanding of what is true and false (see Chapter 7 “The Spirit of Truth”), or on the tradition of the Church which has its own means to check the validity of such kind of experience. Anyway, it is a very determined and honest approach to what is sometimes regarded as being of the purely individual nature and hence, not subject to analysis.

According to the aims of the Report, the issue that was analysed first is that of the charismatic experience of praying ‘in the Spirit’, and not the biblical basis of the doctrine on the Holy Spirit. The forms of prayer used by the Charismatics aroused numerous questions of interpreting such kind of prayer, the issue of the Holy Spirit’s presence and the experience of Him. The approach applied in the Report is based directly on modern charismatic experiences, but it seeks to answer fundamental questions: ‘What *is* an ‘experience’ of the Holy Spirit? Is it in any clear way distinguishable from an ‘experience’ of the Father and the Son? And, if not, why should we wish to speak of the Spirit as a distinct Person at all?’<sup>75</sup> However problematic such a

<sup>74</sup> Church of England, Doctrine Commission of the General Synod, *We Believe in the Holy Spirit* (London: Church House Publishing, 1991), 15.

<sup>75</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 18.

shift from the experience of the Holy Spirit to knowledge about his actual nature may seem, the Report argues that the only way to obtain any knowledge about the Third Person of the Trinity is through his own actions. The problem here is widely recognised by many theologians: 'The personal being of the Spirit remains mysteriously hidden, even if He is active at every great step of divine activity: creation, redemption, ultimate fulfilment'<sup>76</sup>. But in this Report it is especially argued that in order to achieve clear theological truth, we should start from real life experience and then see if it can fit the Scriptures and tradition. It is a common methodological approach of the Doctrine Commission in dealing with current problems the Church confronts; they use the Scriptures as the touchstone in order to do justice to those phenomena and show whether they are a part of the Church's spiritual heritage.

It also explains the structure of Chapter 2, "Charismatic Experience: Praying 'In the Spirit'": first come interviews, then theological commentary on them and a general conclusion on this topic. This is the way in which major discrepancies in charismatic beliefs and Church practice are brought to discussion. However enthusiastic about 'praying in the Spirit' and worshipping Him, the Charismatics tend at times to pay too much attention to individual feelings of extreme joy or elation, thus claiming that only 'triumphant' prayer comes from the Spirit. From this point of view it is very hard to explain why certain people do not have such an experience and it is very easy to claim that this is a clear sign of not belonging to the 'chosen'. At the same time many Charismatics had to admit that the Spirit carried them to the relation of God to God, which is the movement of mutual love. This mutual love is centred in the Holy Spirit and points to Jesus Christ who serves as the image of God the Father for us. In this case, no special value can be paid exclusively to the prayer 'in the Spirit', because all prayer is from God and to God, and as such it is in the Holy Spirit as well. Some charismatic versions of interpretation of their experience may be formed in contrast to the Church and as such may lead to 'a danger of associating particular sorts of experience with the Spirit (and possibly others with the Son and Father); and this, as the debates of the fourth century highlighted, may lead either to an implicit tritheism (a belief in three different gods), or else to a sporadic, instrumentalist, and possibly impersonal, vision of the Spirit'<sup>77</sup>. No one would possibly argue that so far there is nothing wrong in having

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<sup>76</sup> Meyendorff, John, *Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 168.

<sup>77</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 34.

different religious experience, but one-sided interpretation of it can lead as far as the denial of the Personhood of the Holy Spirit. The Report argues that the experience a believer has is not his or her own invention or state of psyche, but a gift from God, and the human mind cannot discern distinct Persons in one divine action. The Trinity in the activity *ad extra* cannot be regarded as three different gods acting, but only as one will transforming creation. It is the basis of any Christian experience of God. The Report turns once again to the mystery of the Trinity's nature in order to indicate the dynamic of God's disclosure in human experience: '...it could not be different *sorts* of 'experience' (in the sense of emotional tonality) that were associated with the three Persons in their one divine flow of activity, but only the particular way they were related to one another internally: 'Father as source of all, Spirit as divine goad in restless quest for creation's return again to the Father, Son as the divine prototype of that redeemed and transformed creation'<sup>78</sup>.

Chapter 3 "Is this that?" turns again to the Charismatics' experience and their claim that their experience is the same that the apostles had, and the chapter seeks to show if it can be validated by means of the Scripture. There are certain issues that the Charismatics were particularly eager to claim them as necessary for Christian life: baptism in the Holy Spirit, the gifts of the Spirit, tongues, prophesy and healings, as well as the word of knowledge. There is no need to discuss the entire chapter in much detail, but it is the most coherent critique of the Charismatics and their practices. Although the critique starts positively with the admission that Charismatic contribution to the understanding that the ministry of every member of the community is really significant, the Report points out that the Charismatics need to evaluate their claims of possessing first hand and authentic apostolic experience more thoroughly in the light of the Scripture. Let us consider the issue of the gifts of the Spirit as an example here. The list of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is in 1 Co. 12:6 – 11 and many of them are connected with miraculous power or abilities. And there is a certain temptation among the Charismatics to regard these gifts as the sign of 'genuine' faith and despise those who do not perform them. At the same time 'we all have different gifts, according to the grace given us' (Rom. 12:6) and no man dare judge God's grace and mercy that decides who is worthy to have some particular gift, and even a humble gift and contribution are precious. Apart from all the vivid and wondrous gifts that are so appealing to the

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<sup>78</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 35.



Charismatics, there is one gift of much more significant importance for all the people which is not often mentioned – the gift of eternal life for those who believe in Jesus Christ. This gift sustains the Church of Christ and is the matter of the Spirit's works.

The major critique on the Charismatics from the Church of England appeals, however, to the Charismatic movement in particular as a social phenomenon, and not to some individual beliefs of its adherents. It is justly stated that in the Charismatic movement there is always a tendency to put primary stress on individual involvement into group practices. And there one can often witness a slight, but constant group pressure on an individual and on his or her attitude towards group activities. Constant demands for euphoria and joy cannot meet needs those who are trying to find out their own way of worshipping and communicating with God alongside what other members of the group do, and as a result it can evoke a sense of self-uncertainty and lead to depression. Two more points to mention: an exclusive value put on personal impulses in praying and believing and alertness that the Charismatic movement pays too much attention to itself and refuses at times to confront the world's demands. These two points reflect the main concern of Anglican critics about Charismatic ecclesiology. The degree and balance of actual critique and positive attitude from the Church of England can be illustrated by two quotations placed on the same page of the Report: 'The doctrine and the institutional life of the Church are frequently downgraded in the [charismatic] movement as regarded as hindrances to the gospel'<sup>79</sup> which is not considered as a sign of apostasy but as 'mainly the side-effects of a zeal in the Spirit which we whole-heartedly welcome and in which we recognise the hand of God'<sup>80</sup>. Thus, although attentive to possible dangers of blind devotion to the charismatic agenda, the Report aims at a very positive objective: to create the doctrine of the Holy Spirit not as a kind of negation of what the Charismatics think of it, but as an affirmation of the role of the Holy Spirit in the world and the Church.

The Chapter "The Spirit of Jesus" aims to construct this positive pneumatology, following the initial intuition that the doctrine of the Holy Spirit is always Christocentric. According to the Gospels, Jesus Christ could exercise his power only through and in the Spirit and, owing to his life in the Spirit, people can come to God and become his children, but this liberation was also achieved, because the Spirit was present in Jesus Christ's humiliation (*κενωσις* of the Holy Spirit) and sufferings, and

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<sup>79</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 55.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*



followed Him till the despair of death. Though Jesus Christ performed miracles and even raised from the dead, what remains of special importance for us all, is the fact that 'he is the one around whom the community of God's sons and daughters is gathered, gathered by the creative power he bestows, the life of the Holy Spirit'<sup>81</sup>. Thus, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit in its interrelation with Christology inevitably leads to ecclesiology (the Church is the Body of Christ, filled by the Spirit), sacramental theology (especially Eucharistic) and the matter of the salvation and restoration of the entire creation in God. The inseparability of Christ and the Spirit can be illustrated by the reference to the Fathers of Church. For instance, St. Basil the Great says, 'The heavenly powers were established by the Spirit [...]. Christ comes, and the Spirit prepares His way. He comes in the flesh, but the Spirit is never separated from Him'<sup>82</sup>. All the implications mentioned above were discussed in other chapters of the Report, but this chapter asks the question about the particular status of the Holy Spirit among the other Persons of the Trinity.

The Report acknowledges that there are no absolutely adequate models of speaking about the Holy Spirit because he was not revealed to us; he is always hidden behind the image of Christ who is the image of the Father. At the same time, however inappropriate, there are two major methods to gain some positive knowledge about the Holy Spirit. The Spirit can be regarded by means of his works, his functions in the process of redemption and the believers' experience. In the Spirit believers get their new life and they are destined to become the 'likeness' of Jesus Christ. The first approach, largely influenced by Augustine, sees the Holy Spirit participating in redeeming work of God as mutual movement of divine love and self-sharing. The Spirit is an eternal gift of love from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father, and it is the essence of God's nature. But there is a certain danger in regarding the Spirit as somehow subordinate to another Persons of the Trinity (source of the main controversy in the question of *filioque*). Another way of thinking stresses the Spirit as bringing harmony to the divine action and broadening it to the whole creation, and it is the Spirit who makes mutual love between the Father and the Son (and between God and man) possible. This is largely the way of Orthodox theology, where the principle of the economy is carried to the Trinitarian life: 'The same Spirit who rests on the Son from all eternity is the One

<sup>81</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 64.

<sup>82</sup> St Basil *On the Holy Spirit*, 77 in Bobrinskoy, Boris, *The Mystery of the Trinity* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1999), 274.

who, in the time of the Redemption, resurrected and pneumatized His mortal Body. The same Spirit actualizes His presence in His Body which is the Church, and accomplishes our trinitarian becoming in the Church<sup>83</sup>. Putting very roughly, the Anglican position is closer to the first approach in stressing eternal divine 'giving away' as movement of love, but at the same time it proclaims the ultimate openness of the creation to the love of God: 'The Father gives life to the Son, the Father and the Son give their life to the world'<sup>84</sup>, the creation gives itself in praise to the Father through the Son; and what makes this one single act of God's love is the unity of the Holy Spirit, working in both divine and created love<sup>85</sup>.

Another way of arguing that the Holy Spirit is a Person can be by way of theological speculation on the event of Pentecost, which is seen not as a kind of mechanical consequence from the ministry of Jesus Christ, but as a free (and thus personal) activity of the Spirit. But whatever approach is adopted, one cannot deny that praying 'in Spirit' cannot be divided from praying 'in Christ to God the Father', which leads to reformulating the whole notion of discipleship ('following Christ') and its ethical implications that was largely ignored by the Charismatics.

The theme of discipleship, ministry and the Spirit is closely connected with the topic of the Church and its sacraments. Although written primarily as a polemical response to the Charismatic idea that baptism 'in Spirit' surpasses baptism in its traditional form, the chapter makes a notable contribution to the understanding of the relations between ecclesiology and Christology in the light of salvation. Jesus is united with the Father by his nature (the Creed says He is 'consubstantial with the Father'), and he was truly the Son of God, whereas we can become God's children only through Jesus Christ and the Spirit by adoption and grace.

There is one more very important correlation between the Spirit and the Church, which finds its expression in the sacraments. The Church is justly regarded as the realm of the Spirit's revelation, but unlike the revelation of Christ through incarnation from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary that took place in exact historical time, the revelation of the Spirit is known to us as a future event. The Holy Spirit is already present in the sacraments that aim to sustain us in our longing of God, and this stress on the present day reality helps us to do justice to the Spirit's ability to transform the life of

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<sup>83</sup> Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity*, 297.

<sup>84</sup> This statement should be regarded very carefully as there is a certain tendency of Patripassianistic mode of thinking (see also the previous Report on the trinitarian relationships). Cf. p. 66.

<sup>85</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 67.

Christians and bring along another dimension of responsibility. At the same moment, it is a matter of future and the source of hope when the work of the Spirit will be fulfilled. Equal respect to both aspects of the Church's life in the Spirit is also evident in the texts of the liturgy.

Both Chapter 5 and the next one, titled "The Spirit and Power", pay much attention to the aim of human nature and necessary responsibility in understanding the notion of power as Christ's power in the Spirit through weakness and humiliation. By baptism people become Christians, but only by the work of the Spirit (which can be a long process) and by a person's free 'cooperation' (*συνεργεία*) a person becomes the member of the Church and a member of Christ's body, which is stressed during every communion. Faith is gained not by means of witnessing or producing signs and wonders, but by admission of the fact that 'We remain 'in Adam', subject to weakness, fallenness, sin, suffering and death. 'In Christ', however, we are open to the power of God's future, that is to justification, deliverance from wrath, the power and gifts of the Holy Spirit'<sup>86</sup>. That is why even while exercising secular powers, economic or political ones, Christians should remember that the source of ultimate power is God (which is most dramatically understood in death encounter) and that they should exercise power only to serve God in the world, applying Christian ethics to every single situation of injustice or pain and suffering.

The following chapters 'The Spirit of Truth' and on the Spirit and creativity could seem to be more 'practical', and in fact they are oriented towards building a coherent bulk of teaching that would satisfy modern criteria of plausibility. Certain vagueness about such criteria is shown in Chapter 7 "The Spirit of Truth" where the authors raise the question whether we can speak of the clear distinction between witnessing the Holy Spirit and mere conviction of such an experience. The Bible claims that the Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 15.26), but there is no straightforward answer today what the truth itself is. Instead of it, we face different models of truth: the correspondence theory, the coherence theory, the pragmatic model of truth, semantic and performative theory – which aim to explain the widest possible set of phenomena. The multitude of these approaches to the truth indicates the imperfection of human ability to attain flawless knowledge about the world and us. But all the 'truths' serve right to certain extent and so the authors turn to the biblical writings in order to indicate

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<sup>86</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 107.

that all the main approaches are relevant to the Scripture. There we can find a notable instance of a thorough method of investigation in the Bible: the Report draws a distinction between the 'Hebraic' notion of truth (*'emesh*), which is represented in the Old Testament, and the 'Greek' view (*aletheia*), which is a highly philosophical concept in the majority of cases where this word appears in the Scriptures. The fact that there is a plurality of understandings about what the truth is in both Testaments points out that all of them are relevant in certain context of life and thought, and this is no reason to dismiss Scripture, because it cannot provide only one ultimate point of view.

Authoritative truth would violate human freedom and contradict a simple fact that different times have different understandings of the truth. At the same time for nearly two thousand years the Scriptures have remained the source of truth for all Christians, and it is still so even in our age of relativism.

The question of the Spirit and the truth is closely connected with the issue of the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and the questions about the Spirit and the truth are not ethereal ones, they 'involve the present no less than the past; action, no less than knowledge; transformation, no less than the acquisition of understanding'<sup>87</sup>.

Next two chapters are devoted to the Spirit and creativity: either the creativity of God (Chapter 8 "The Spirit and Creation") or the creativity of man (Chapter 9 "The Spirit and Creativity"). The theme of the interrelations between the creation and its Creator in the light of the Trinitarian theology has been already raised throughout the essay together with the significance of this issue. The Bible provides us with the magnificent picture of the Spirit taking active part in the creation from the beginning of the physical world, when 'the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters' (Gen. 1.2) to the end of the world as we know it and the Spirit's promise to people who die for the Lord that they will find eternal life in the ages to come (Rev. 15.13). However tempting to regard Pentecost as the sign of the Spirit and the Parousia coming, it would be unwise to do it, because the gifts of the Spirit were revealed as the promise of the future.

Chapter 8 of the Report claims to run an inquiry into the nature of the physical universe according to our current stage of knowledge in order to prove that the modern picture of the world does not entirely exclude the possibility of the Spirit's working in creation and, on the contrary, finds significant counterparts in pneumatology. There is a certain anxiety expressed in the Report that the ignorance of the theologians in the

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<sup>87</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 132.



sphere of modern science 'may have contributed to modern feelings of the irrelevance of religion'<sup>88</sup>. The main accents and method of thinking concerning the theme of what we really know about the physical world reveals that there is more of a possibility to admit that there is the Spirit's working within the world that is evolving as a complex supersystem than one could guess, basing on the mechanical presumptions of 19<sup>th</sup> century physics. The chapter contributes to the argumentation, which has been raised in two previous Reports concerning this topic. It would be useful here just to mention two more implications that were given account of in the current Report: the phenomenon of suffering existing in the world is regarded as closely connected with the concept of the Spirit's passion in creative processes (which can also be regarded as a contribution to the topic of theodicy, see 2 Cor. 5.4-5, for example); and secondly, admission that the Spirit is working within the created order results in a particular attitude towards the creation now and here (what might be called 'ecothological approach'). The second point finds its counterpart also in the Eastern tradition, which regards man and creation together in the indication to final deification (a new heaven and a new earth of the Revelation) through salvation in Jesus Christ. The Spirit fills this process and liberates man from the dominance of nature; but now it seems that it is the nature that should be rescued from the consuming attitude of man. According to the plan of reuniting the creation with God 'instead of dominating man, nature becomes his servant, since he is the image of God. The original paradisaic relationship between God, man and the cosmos is proclaimed again: the descent of the Spirit anticipates the ultimate fulfilment when God will be 'all in all''<sup>89</sup>.

It is not an aim of this essay to give a detailed account of the description of the Spirit and creativity provided in Chapter 9, and here will be only a brief discussion of the main issues. Although this chapter is a very interesting attempt to describe the arts as either 'classical' (i.e. aiming to prove the natural order and beauty of the world and thus, indicate to Creator) or 'romantic', the initial assumption is much wider. Creativity is not confined in the sphere of fine arts only; man creates in his works as well. The term 'romantic' arts is used here in its initial sense, meaning 'modern', when we can observe lack of man's confidence in the power of reason both in humanity and in the world. On the contrary, 'classical' art points to God as Beauty itself and argues that God

<sup>88</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 135.

<sup>89</sup> Meyendorff, John, *Byzantine Theology. Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1974), 170.



at the same time is the Truth and the Good itself, since aesthetics and morals cannot be separated. Unlike divine creativity, which creates everything *ex nihilo*, a man is always restricted by the material he uses and cannot claim to obtain in himself the criteria for entire transformation of the world. There is one more very important dimension of the creativity: along with the productive side, a creator (not only an artist) aims to reveal the sense and meaning of the world order and to show a man's place in it. The latter is true both in the realm of philosophy and the area of work (the problem of alienation, *Entfremdung*, of the modern man).

The discussion of the Spirit and creativity inevitably points out that the Holy Spirit is both within and beyond the world. The 'fulfilment of things' is a matter of the future. As St. Basil the Great put it: 'The principle of all the things is one, which creates through the Son and perfects in the Spirit'<sup>90</sup>. And the last chapter of the Report "The Holy Spirit and the Future" is a corollary and a natural synopsis of what has been said earlier in the text. The present experience of the Holy Spirit, which has been discussed at a great length in this Report, transforms the current situation and always anticipates what is going in the future. Our still partial knowledge of truth and the Holy Spirit, the notion of the Church as the communion of saints filled by the Spirit, human longing to find sense in the world and bring meaning to life by means of arts point to the future, which is definitely seen as the realm of redemption. Once again we cannot discern it without turning to Christology: Jesus Christ has made our future and the future of the entire creation certain, but the Holy Spirit is still at work and 'together with Father and Son is worshipped and together glorified'. The Report stresses out that we cannot yet conceive the future and the last judgement, which precedes the unity of all things with God, but the Spirit and Jesus Christ affirm that the nature of that future will be love, the nature of the Trinity. That is the source of hope for Christians here and now, the same as it was in the first century BCE.

The last chapter is a very serious theological attempt to do justice to all the themes of redemption, sanctification, salvation and the doctrine of the last things according to pneumatology, which has been constructed very neatly by the Report. It is literally impossible to give a full account of it without mere reciting huge bulks of text, that is why as a conclusion we may propose another way of talking about epiclesis – the anaphora of St. Basil as it is celebrated in the Byzantine Church. It has been chosen for

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<sup>90</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 169.

several reason: liturgy always contains a locus of epiclesis and the essence of the Church's doctrine of the Holy Spirit, but even more important, it is the expression of Christian hope for the future uniting by the Holy Spirit of the sinful and imperfect people in the Church and correspondingly, in the intratrinitarian relationships (a *koinonia* of humankind with God):

'We pray Thee and call upon Thee, O Holy of Holies, that, by the favour of Thy goodness, Thy Holy Spirit may come upon us and upon the gifts now offered, to bless, to hallow, and to show this bread to be the precious Body of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, and this cup to be the precious Blood of our Lord and God and Saviour Jesus Christ, shed for the life of the world, and [that the Spirit may] unite all of us to one another who become partakers of the one Bread and Cup in the communion [*koinonia*] of the Holy Spirit'<sup>91</sup>.

The Report also expresses human longing for love and future hope: 'Yet amidst pain and suffering, the yearning of the Holy Spirit... expresses itself in deeds of love, and longs for the future which God alone can bring'<sup>92</sup>.

### **e) Conclusion.**

Both Reports analysed here are a piece of a very serious and thoughtful theological thinking. Although they were published in order to be a polemic against other paradigms of reasoning, they far outstretched this role, having made a substantial contribution to Anglican theology. Both Reports served to perform a manifold task: first of all, to diagnose what exactly in popular or academic theology had gone astray from what the Church of England felt obliged to teach. Here the huge impact of new church practices was recognised, especially while depicting the features of the Charismatic renewal.

The material and relevant evidence then were discussed and analysed without dismissing it merely on the grounds of being seemingly wrong or different to the Church's position. And only after that, did a thorough analysis actually become the base for the forthcoming synthesis. That is in fact the mechanism of how Anglican theology was forged in those two Reports. The members of the Doctrine Commission felt free to turn to other traditions or confessions in order to demonstrate how the same problems were dealt with while they were working on the Reports. However, the overall stance of

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<sup>91</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 174-175.

<sup>92</sup> *We Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 186.

the theological discourse remained unmistakably Anglican. It is of pivotal importance that both Reports were commended for the study of the whole Church of England.

Thus, it should be noted that the Reports have managed to fulfil their role to serve not only as apologetics on traditional Christian doctrine, but also to become a positive and creative theological enterprise of proving Christian faith as still relevant for the modern man and showing that there can be no Christianity without the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. The last argument demonstrates the ability of the core of the Christian message as it is presented in the Scriptures and the Creeds to transcend limits of time and space and serve as a living foundation for understanding a man and seeing the nature of the Church.

The present Reports attained much better theological quality than the previous ones. And they now became unanimous, which means that all the members of the Doctrine Commission managed to achieve such a level of mutual understanding of the doctrinal matters that they could subscribe under every single line of the final texts. It does not mean that the material was somewhat easier than that considered in “Christian Believing” and “Believing in the Church” – on the contrary! – but it certainly means that the Church of England recovered its ability to voice its opinion in a way which could be regarded as authoritative, though also open to discussions.

Whereas two first Reports of the Doctrine Commission dealt with the meta-theological question of the nature (and validity) of corporate expressions of belief<sup>93</sup>, “We Believe in God” and its successors aimed at clarifying the actual contents of faith as it is expressed by the Church of England.

“We Believe in God” provides a wide scope of approaches to the doctrine of God and sustains the doctrine of God as being personal, both transcendent and unattainable by human knowledge and at the same time actively involved into His creation. The knowledge of the Triune God is also the cognitive basis for answering such fundamental questions as the nature and purpose of human existence and also the meaning of the world. Such knowledge, rooted in the Divine love and being a response to it, is much more than an intellectual concept solely and requires another understanding of a man as a whole being as well.

“We Believe in the Holy Spirit” is the project of constructing Anglican pneumatology in order to compensate for a long lack of serious theological interest to

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<sup>93</sup> Debate on *Believing in the Church* in General Synod: February Group of Sessions 1982. *Report of Proceedings*, vol. 13, No 1 (London: CIO Publishing, 1982), 179.

the Third Person of the Trinity. But it is also a confession that such a theology can be done only on the basis and in the constant interaction with the Trinitarian doctrine. In order to prove the viability of this approach both biblical evidence and modern experience are taken into account and thoroughly analysed.

The tasks and common features of the Reports were re-visited during the preparation of the last up to date Report of the Doctrine Commission "The Mystery of Salvation" (1995). This Report proves the claim that the Trinitarian theology was seen as a cornerstone of the doctrinal position of the Church of England: 'common to all three reports has been... the trinitarian nature of Christian faith which... has been treated with full seriousness'<sup>94</sup>. Another common feature was to consider theological questions in the context of contemporary world and the Church. The obvious task was to bring together traditional Christian faith and present pastoral concerns. "The Mystery of Salvation" presented the view of the Church of England on the problems of soteriology in the following way: the Trinitarian faith served as a basis for the whole discourse, then there were a number of relevant biblical and historical references to provide the exact form which the doctrine of salvation took in the course of time. And only after that contemporary issues were addressed, the most pressing being the necessity to reconcile the claims of Christianity as a religion of salvation with similar claims of other world traditions.

Such logic of the inner development as presented in "The Mystery of Salvation" had occurred in two previous Reports already. What is worth mentioning here is this procedure when the historical evidences and contemporary ideas and data were double-checked on the biblical grounds and a wider Christian tradition. There is a firm design here to provide a theologically correct document on pneumatology, soteriology, etc, which is specifically Anglican in its contents and stance and which can also meet the demands of particular time and pastoral situation. At least ideally, the gap between theory and practice was seen as avoidable, which constitutes the pastoral value of the Reports.

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<sup>94</sup> Church of England, Doctrine Commission of the General Synod *The Mystery of Salvation: A story of God's gift* (London: Church House Publishing, 1995), xi.



#### **4. Believing in the Church and the corporate nature of worship.**

Chapter 4 follows the pattern set in the previous chapters, as its starting point is the actual analysis of one more Report by the Doctrine Commission – “Believing in the Church”. One of the questions raised in this Report is the question of interrelation between doctrine and worship and this is a question of meta-theology.

The main emphasis of Chapter 3 – Trinitarian theology – is still a priority here, and much effort is spent demonstrating how the liturgical material reflects this stance. The main issue of Chapter 4 is the issue of the recovery of corporate consciousness as it is witnessed in and through worship. Both topics are constantly referred to during the discussion of the process of liturgical reforms.

The first sub-chapter on “Believing in the Church” links Chapter 4 with the rest of the thesis as it provides the position of the Doctrine Commission on the concept of corporate believing. The sub-chapter “Worship and doctrine in the Church of England” demonstrates the particular way that doctrine is defined legally according to the canon law of the Church of England and indicates why it is essential to turn to the liturgical revision from 1966 till the present day. It also elucidates the methodology of the research and is central for the whole thesis as it links both strands (doctrine and worship) together. The following sections of Chapter 4 provide the actual material on the process of the liturgical revision, which leads to the analysis of the underlying theology of the recent liturgical reforms in the Church of England.

Finally, the conclusion to Chapter 4 is designed be a synthesis with a view to elucidate the relation between doctrine and worship, based mostly on the material of “Common Worship”, which is currently being used by the Church of England.

#### **a) Believing in the Church. The Corporate Nature of Faith. A Report by the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England.**

The Report of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England “Believing in the Church”, which was published in 1981, has a significant subtitle: “The Corporate Nature of Faith”. The nature of Christian faith is thus defined as being ‘corporate’, which inevitably leads us to think about the definition of the Christian Church as well. The Church is the Body of Christ – *corpus Christi* – and, as any living body, is an organic unity of its members. To put it in the form of a definition, Christian faith is identified as *Quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus creditum est*, and the core of



the current research is the third clause '*ab omnibus*', which means that we have to deal with the concept of 'one' and 'everyone' and with the tension between an individual and the Church as an established institution.

The great bulk of the Report is dedicated to all the manifold interconnections and relations which occur when one is dealing with something of a corporate nature – that is, not only Christian faith, but also knowledge, common attitudes and the development of modern sciences became the subject under investigation. The predominant methodology is admitting the existence of such a phenomenon as 'corporate believing' and so running the research according to this basic assumption.

Another very important and acute point is the discussion of the place and function of the concept of a story or a narrative in the Christian tradition. It is not just one more topic of some interest for the members of the Commission, but a vital part of preserving and maintaining personal commitment to the Christian heritage.

Closely related to those two main areas of consideration is also the question about the nature of the doctrine which is seen to be there one of the means of expressing corporate Christian faith.

The objective of this chapter is to outline the methodology, which sustains the whole discussion, and to pay special attention to how the theologians shift from a general notion of corporate phenomena to its concrete application in the realm of Christian faith and Church's practice. The aim here is to make explicit all broader cognitive assumptions that the contributors to the Report held in common and subsequently based their reasoning upon. While discussing the Report, it should be also borne in mind that like its predecessor, the 1976 Report on Christian believing, this Report is a collection of essays by different authors, and not a document of shared ideas and their wording. However, it cannot be denied that the contributors were in a much greater degree of agreement with each other, than is seen in the 1976 Report. In conclusion it seems worthwhile to analyse the function and the place of the doctrines in the given system of corporate believing and practice. Of course, it is literally impossible to express the position and the route of thinking of every author here, and my position is to follow the inner logic of the Report, which is implicitly articulated in the word combination 'corporate believing'.

When one turns to analyse any phenomenon of the corporate nature, one can rightly claim that it is not necessarily Christianity one usually starts with. Christianity as an historic religion is just one example from a huge number of versatile systems that are

subject to systems analysis. At every level of the Universe, from Galaxies to human cells, we can observe highly-structured, organised systems that make the flow of world energy and information strictly ordered. That is the starting point for John Bowker's argument in his article entitled "Religions as Systems". It goes without saying that Christianity is a system (or, more precisely, several sub-systems) that has managed to maintain and develop itself for two thousand years so far. As every system, it consists of a number of elements and all the different relations between them. Neither elements, nor relations should be treated separately if one claims to run a thorough analysis of Christianity, but at the same time Christianity is not just an algebraic sum of its components, it is a living body that is rooted in the past and is witnessing to its truth every single moment by various means through the consciousness of its adherents.

The core of every system is its source and it stays basically the same regardless of the possible degree of complexity the initial entity may achieve in its development. For Christianity such a core is the Revelation of the eternal God made known to humankind. The teaching of the Church is seen as given from God, and not as a mere human invention (in this sense one might even say that the Church is from God and for God, and not, paradoxically, for people). The Church in her loyalty to God's word leads to salvation of the believers and should be therefore distinguished here from the church as an institution, prone to mistakes, however temporal ones. The truth of the Revelation transcends all the historical and cultural limits of both the early Christians who made records and of our contemporaries who recite them and express their own personal commitment to the Church of Christ. As any system, Christianity, though being an open system, has its clear boundaries, which are the means of its interaction with the environment. In terms of conceptual contents, these boundaries enable us to distinguish Christianity from other religious traditions and to analyse the Christian faith 'from within'. Although a boundary is a highly subjective notion as it can be drawn drastically differently, and its role can be either efficient, or disintegrating, it refers to some firm criterion, which is the core and the purpose of Christianity as a system.

And as we come to speak about the concept of purpose, the unique nature of Christianity must be exposed. John Bowker at times describes Christianity as a system that is very much like that of Islam, or Shinto, or Buddhism. It is a common approach of the sociology of religion which sees a man either as a bundle of perceptions or a bundle of relations. However different Anglicanism and Taoism may be, they can be juxtaposed and compared as social systems, and psychology of religion, in its turn, can

compare the Hesychast techniques with Tibetan meditation, taking no special notice of the doctrinal framework. From the purely sociological point of view, all the beliefs can become irrelevant and a scientist can even claim to disclose common archetypes for all humankind and all the known religious traditions (e.g. the works by Karl Jung).

Drawing boundaries makes research of a living faith always in a way artificial, dependant on the researcher's position, and as far as we speak from the point of view of the systems analysis applied to religion, the purpose of Christianity is to live on and maintain itself. But when we turn to the corporate believing of the Christian Church, we cannot ignore that theological content which makes Christianity Christianity and transcends all the social or cultural differences between different denominations. Here we leave the area of systems analysis and turn to the standpoint of Christianity which is its purpose and aim: 'The purpose of the Christian system, and of the sub-systems which constitute Christianity, is to enable individuals to love God and to love their neighbour as themselves... The purpose of the system is to make real among us forgiveness, redemption and atonement.'<sup>1</sup>

Thus, Christianity is the system open to God through faith and sacraments and to an individual whom it involves in this mystery of sharing faith and attitudes, which are presented in the form of information. An individual is supposed to get information from the system and to make it the core of his or her own life. The relation between the system and an individual is again twofold: if Christianity is only a system among others, any individual is free to decide whether to prefer this religious tradition, or some other one, or indeed, none at all. It would be right to ask if it is just a matter of purely personal choice.

The question is not a new one. One of the possible solutions of the dilemma between individual beliefs and the faith of the Church was proposed by H.E.W. Turner in the 1976 Report of the Doctrine Commission: 'For myself I am convinced that the Church has norms of belief and teaching, first and foremost the Bible, but also the historic creeds as subordinate or dependant standards... The Church must hold fast to the past if it is not to become a society without roots, yet it must always seek to remain within earshot of its own contemporaries.'<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Church of England, Doctrine Commission, *Believing in the Church. The Corporate Nature of Faith* (London: SPCK, 1981), 180.

<sup>2</sup> Church of England, Doctrine Commission, *Christian Believing. The Nature of the Christian Faith and its Expression in Holy Scripture and Creeds* (London: SPCK, 1976), 123.

One and the same sentence speaks about personal conviction and the Church's faith. Here we find no tension in this statement unless one puts too much stress on either part – and then both individualism and sheer conservatism can become blind. The current Report in its "Introduction: The Voice of the City" by John Taylor warns against the present-day extreme individualism in matters of religion and personal beliefs, which is due to historical, cultural and philosophical factors in the Western world that have been in progress for several centuries.

But alongside merely individualistic or authoritative approaches there exist a number of facts that cannot be described in any of the two ways, but only as intrasubjective. This is the common characteristic of scientific paradigms or political institutions and establishments. In another words, there is 'corporate believing' in every sphere of activity of man's mind and spirit. A scientist works within a given set of axioms and assumptions, and for his work it is not usually essential that he should analyse the basics of scientific corporate believing. Only geniuses like Newton or Einstein dare abandon the whole set of axioms and show the exact limits where old laws can be still applicable. But as far as religion is concerned, the situation is drastically different to what we can observe in the sciences: many people nowadays rather claim that they are not happy with the old form of expressing faith and that the Church's dogmas violate their own personal beliefs, however opaque the latter can be (which is very well illustrated by such a modern phenomenon as New Age and its popularity).

And now we come to the essentials of what is called the 'corporate believing' of the Church and need to answer questions about its nature, sources of authority and means of expression.

The general approach is the same: the authors argue that in every area of human knowledge we can indicate a corporate factor which is neither authoritative nor arbitrary nor pre-critical, but which provides the necessary soil for critical thought. That is a wide subject of the sociology of knowledge. And it is a noble task to show that the corporate foundations of knowledge have been so often underestimated.

Anthony Thiselton in the chapter "Knowledge, Myth and Corporate Memory" claims that 'arguments about corporate knowledge require no special pleading on behalf of religion or the Christian community'<sup>3</sup> but that we can as well turn to the history of science with its consequence of paradigms, to the basics of human language or to the

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<sup>3</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 59.



notion of common sense and find there some inevitable corporate background. It should also be stated that we could not avoid referring to that background while dealing with questions of continuity and self-identity of a religious tradition. Corporate foundations make up a broader framework for faith to be established and professed and to face any form of criticism. As particular 'instruments', which help to form and maintain a tradition, A. Thiselton names creeds, liturgy and pastoral oversight. But the major stress is put on the Bible and the sacraments. They help remind that Christianity is rooted in the past, but it has to deploy itself at every present moment: 'They effectively anchor the community's present both in the founding events of its past and within the overall framework of its ongoing life in a way which transcends individual experience and provides a control against undue novelty or individual innovation'<sup>4</sup>.

The question about what corporate believing is cannot be regarded separately from the question of the sources of authority in corporate believing. Quite a straightforward answer to this would be found in the Scripture. This is what A. Harvey argues in his article "Attending to Scripture". He aims to point out that the Scripture must be considered to be widely recognised by all Christians, embedded in the worship and even daily life of the Christians and, finally, that the Scripture should be considered to be true today. And although people do not need clear-cut definitions based on the Bible to serve as an example to follow every day, the role of Scripture for the corporate memory of the Church is not to be undervalued, and the corollary the author provides is that 'by virtue of their privileged place in the long chain of transmission and interpretation by which the vital facts of the Christian past reach us today; in virtue of a basic consistency which holds together the diversity of the various interpretations; and in virtue, finally, of their sheer irreplaceability at the fountainhead of the Church's access to its own past, the biblical writings must necessarily continue to be authoritative...'<sup>5</sup>!

Thus, the Bible belongs to the corporate memory of a community, influences its life and it is the community as a whole that perceives the Scripture and reinterprets it constantly. Being described this way, the Scripture seems to perform functions similar to those of myth. A. Thiselton in the quoted chapter shows the features common to both myth and the Scripture, putting the problem of language to the forefront. Both myth and the biblical writings share not solely the language full of metaphors and symbols. This

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<sup>4</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 63.

<sup>5</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 42.



kind of language considered here obtains not only informative function. The language of myth and the Scripture alike are not only 'a reiteration of shared memory, shared reality and shared experience, but also a reiteration and reappropriation of shared attitudes, shared imperatives and shared practices'<sup>6</sup>.

Those shared attitudes and common basic intuitions bring us closer to understanding the nature and the role that the Bible still plays today, taking us away from the notion of myth which appeared to be of not much use while discussing the relations between corporate believing and individual criticism. The sphere of attitudes and shared believing stresses Christian belief as a believer's 'self-involvement' in the world of shared reality. So, we can speak about some shared concepts and attitudes (theoretical aspect) and about certain patterns of behaviour (more broadly, mode of life), which build up the practical aspect. These two aspects establish a wider context, both of the past and the present of a community. The conclusion is quite laconic: 'Christian beliefs are thus, by definition, we shall argue, shared beliefs'<sup>7</sup>.

It is but natural that alongside the Scripture, corporate believing includes liturgy (the position held by J. Barton and J. Halliburton), doctrine (Tom Wright's viewpoint), even some sides of popular religion and, finally, Christian heritage in general. Thus, liturgy occurs not as a 'practical side' of Eucharistic theology, but it is an expression of faith in God. Popular religion with its personal and 'morally sensitive'<sup>8</sup> God becomes an everyday expression – though a provisional one – of positive personal commitment to the Christian Church in this world. The Church is seen as a visible embodiment of corporate believing and its activity is epitomized by means of 'six agents', proposed and classified by Anthony Harvey<sup>9</sup>: authoritative decisions; authorised teachers; doctrine commissions; individual explorers; those who care about certain aspects of Church life, sometimes without being deeply involved in the parish life; and those who contribute to decision-making in all levels of the Church (may be, fulfilling the function of Church's self-consciousness).

Thus, we can conclude that by means of corporate believing every Christian Church and every believer is involved in 'living through' the whole Christian heritage, turning to the past and bringing it anew to the present day. Although corporate believing

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<sup>6</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 69-70.

<sup>7</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 75.

<sup>8</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 151.

<sup>9</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 292-300.

is manifested through individual consciousness, it is revealed by means of shared practice and common faith.

This proposition seems to sound rather trivial when formulated in such a general way, that is why it is worth applying this concept to Anglicanism in order to see how it works. The Report itself deals with the question of corporate believing and corporate faith on three different levels: first of all, a very broad matter of corporate beliefs (science, language we share, corporate memory); secondly, the level of analysis where all religions are treated as sophisticated systems of certain kind; and finally, the method of analysis is applied to Anglicanism and its doctrinal set of beliefs. Corporate Anglican believing is already implicitly present when one speaks about Anglican tradition. Primarily, the sources of authority make this tradition peculiar among other Christian Churches. It can be claimed that according to the Articles of Religion the major authority for Anglicanism is Holy Scripture which is sufficient for salvation and serves as a criterion to judge current Church practices (especially Articles VI, XIX – XXI). At the same time John McManners in his chapter “The Individual in the Church of England” justly argues that Anglicanism seeks to be loyal to the Christian tradition in a broader sense. He even claims that ‘The vast procession of the past generations which have loved Jesus (whether in heresy or orthodoxy) is our inheritance... We live within a consensus and within a tradition’<sup>10</sup>. One could not possibly express the position of tolerance and intellectual freedom more openly. The position of the Church seems here to be a bit vague because neither established ‘common practice’ nor exploration into the Anglican theological ‘temperament’ can prove a criterion whether all Christian thought and tradition is accepted by Anglicanism or only a chosen part. It is a pity that the author has not made greater use of his reference to the role of reason in the Anglican tradition.

A more detailed picture of a specifically Anglican context has been set down in this Report when the authors aimed to define the notion of doctrine, which will be shown later on.

As has been already stated, the theologians also tackled the issue of the significance of the Christian story, or narrative, for corporate believing. The relation of the Christian story and myth has already been briefly analysed.

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<sup>10</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 223.

It is not an objective of this chapter to show all the niceties of so called 'narrative theology' and I can only aim to indicate the importance of the Christian narrative for corporate faith. From this point of view, the story of pivotal interest for Christians is of course the story of redemption (as it is reflected in the Scriptures). This story binds together all the generations of Christians in that it brings good news and aims to evoke the personal commitment of a believer.

It may be useful to show the significance of the Christian story by the example of two cases when Christianity has to face either secular thinking or another religion.

The first case was analysed in the essay by John Drury called "The Archbishop's Hat". Here we can witness the conflict between an individual and the Church institution. In the case of George Eliot, the conflict between corporate and individual ethics brought into being another type of narrative – a social novel as the expression of the author's doubts and beliefs. As any fact of corporate nature, the Christian story is based on a very broad framework of the Christian life and commitment, and the corporate believer aims to share views with those of a distinct group. An individual thinker cannot anchor his or her beliefs in a small group's ethics and claim that to be incorruptible, that is why we see the attempt to turn to humanity at large. The individual looks for salvation in the sea of doubts at his or her own risk and 'the individual who wanted to be a believer in his own way could get this nourishment from the serious novel of personal pilgrimage set in human society at large'<sup>11</sup>.

From this point of view the main bulk of modern fiction is an individual attempt to find the way to salvation outside the Church and sometimes to teach others how to achieve it. But it would not be fair to say that there is an unsolved conflict between the Christian narrative and fiction and that all the world's works of literature (at least belonging to a predominantly Christian culture) are mere samples of people's pride and ignorance of God. Many authors turned to the Christian narrative in order to make a judgement and try to resolve social or individual conflicts they depicted. But the aim was declared in a different way (authors' self-expression through describing the reality was put to the front, and not trying to improve the wrong in the world) and the contexts of reference in the biblical narrative and in a work of fiction vary considerably.

Now let us turn to the situation when Christianity encounters another religious tradition in order to pick up some more characteristic features of the Christian story and

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<sup>11</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 200.

its language. This aspect was outlined in the chapter “Why This Story?” by W.H. Vanstone and D. Young. The main argument is that the Christian Church pays exclusive attention to its own story and thus fails to recognise the importance of other traditions and their sacred texts. Hence, there occurs a popular dictum that 1) Christian truth can be expressed in many ways, not necessarily the traditional one; 2) the Christian story is just one of the possible ways which lead to salvation. To dismiss these two arguments the authors turn to the meaning of the Christian story, which cannot be caught up without the investigation into the language this story uses.

However similar in terms of the plot development or the usage of the figures of speech, the stories of salvation are more than mere texts, more than a bit of written information. They are supposed not only to be read through or learnt by heart like the hymns of the Vedas, but a reader should also be involved in the story itself, should ‘live through’ this very story in order to reach its core and face the ultimate truth that transcends the archaism of the language or possible awkwardness of translations and finally makes a reader believe. Apart from the purely informative function of the language, we have to deal here with its performative function as well, when the act of speech creates a new situation which has not existed before. Thus, we cannot separate form and contents and claim that indifferently to the form of expression, all religions are ‘approximately the same’ or that Christianity needs to be reformulated in a way we would like it to be. That is why ‘we are therefore sceptical about the propriety of the Christian becoming more ‘open’ to receive, through the novel and therefore compelling media of other stories, the truth which it detects in its own story. Truth is not easily abstracted from its container’<sup>12</sup>.

A practical conclusion of what has been said is that Christianity should not aim to reconcile its truth with another religion’s points of view at the cost of excluding its own message. This is not a neutral, known-to-all concept that will be an appropriate answer to the challenge of religious pluralism. Christianity has its own resources and can redefine those concepts of its heritage which would maintain its claims in the modern world (the concepts of revelation and salvation) and would bravely face those of other traditions (primarily, the concept of mission).

Nothing has been said so far about the role of worship and doctrine for Christian corporate believing. It has been done deliberately in order to unite two parts of the

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<sup>12</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 244.



chapter – the analysis of the nature of corporate believing and some views on the Christian narrative – with discussing doctrine as a laconic expression of Christian faith and liturgy, as the recital of the Christian story that performs the role of ‘living through’ of the profession of faith.

John Baker in his chapter devoted to the development of doctrine rather broadly defines doctrine as ‘whatever Christians say when they speak or write about beliefs with a sense of doing so on behalf of the body to which they belong’<sup>13</sup>. To Baker’s mind, as doctrines are the expression of corporate believing, they are also subject to development, which follows the changes in the set patterns of corporate believing. The author proposes his three-fold classification of doctrinal development: the way of logical elaboration, the model of organic growth and the pattern, according to which doctrines are subject to community trial. The first two models can provide only little help, making a clear judgement whether the direction of doctrinal development is true or delusive. The third pattern offers a view on doctrine as a vital part of Christian life and this approach is not a purely rationalistic one. Thus, ‘doctrinal development may be described as a community working out a fuller understanding of its inheritance of faith and submitting this to the test of time, that is, of the life and thought of the Christian people in future generations’<sup>14</sup>. Here *lex orandi* goes before *lex credendi*, and this approach raises a number of questions, not least the question how it could be possible to change certain doctrinal assumptions when the whole community does not have a single view on it and who can exercise such authority in the questions of faith. But it also shows how important it is to take the whole Christian life into account and not to separate mechanically the doctrine of the Church from her everyday life and prayer.

Similar views on doctrine were articulated in Chapter 5 by Tom Wright: ‘Doctrine is the intellectual counterpart of prayer, holiness, love and mission and cannot be ignored or played down without denying one highly important facet of our God-given, and God-shared humanity’<sup>15</sup>.

Doctrine has its roots in the global sphere of Christian corporate believing and practice. At the same time doctrine is designed to control and govern corporate believing. Being understood as part and parcel of Christian life, doctrine should not be rigidly imposed on Christianity ‘from above’ too often: ‘There is not, and the majority

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<sup>13</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 262.

<sup>14</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 266.

<sup>15</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 109.



of us do not desire that there should be, a system of distinctively Anglican Theology. The Anglican Churches have received and hold the faith of Catholic Christendom, but they have exhibited a rich variety in methods both of approach and of interpretation...<sup>16</sup> but should be respected as the necessary 'spelling out and justification of a faith that can be put clearly and simply'<sup>17</sup>.

Dogma in Anglicanism is not understood as the ultimate source of authority but rather as subject to the Church's worship, life and commitment to truth. Doctrine is made clear for every believer in liturgy when they come to a church. We should not (or even cannot) separate doctrine and liturgy. Church is thus defined as 'a story-telling community. It shows from various historical examples how liturgy is a recital of the story of such a kind that the participants are caught up into it and the story goes on in them'<sup>18</sup>.

Thus, the Anglican Church and its corporate believing form a starting point for analysis of specifically Anglican view on the Scriptures, creeds, doctrine, liturgy, worship, the Christian narrative and Christian life in general. At the same time such an analysis of every single facet of the Church's life leads us subsequently to an overall synthesis of all these sides in one single notion of the Church. One can argue here if it would be sufficient to turn to systems analysis as it has been shown by John Bowker, or is it necessary to look for another expression of the living reality, which is the Church. The latter is the wide subject of ecclesiology in general. But what is really important is that this Report has aimed to fulfil its task as a clear response of the Anglican Church to the radical challenges of the 1960s and 1970s, when '*Honest to God*, *The Remaking of Christian Doctrine*, and *The Myth of God Incarnate* seemed to challenge the Church... But no official or authoritative reply was made'<sup>19</sup>. Although it was as late as 1981, the Church managed to respond in a clear voice and proved to be true to the fact that there can be no contradiction between the Church's faith and individual beliefs and that 'Just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ we who are many form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.' (Rom. 12, 4-5)

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<sup>16</sup> Church of England, Doctrine Commission, *Doctrine in the Church of England: The Report of the Commission on Christian Doctrine appointed by the Archbishops of Canterbury and York in 1922* (London: SPCK, 1938), 25 in *Believing in the Church*, 110.

<sup>17</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 282-3.

<sup>18</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 286.

It seems to be worth trying here to show the place of the Report “Believing in the Church” in the Church of England teaching in a broader perspective. Its primary aim was to investigate the problem ‘individual versus corporate’ and to express anew the truth that even in a highly individualistic Western society it is still possible to believe and belong to the Church, although it leaves seemingly little room for personal views and beliefs. In reality, the Christian teaching, in its most ancient and most modern manifestations alike, does not aim to violate personal freedom – on the contrary, its ultimate goal is to liberate a person from everything which blocks the only goal worth achieving and to obtain what the whole humankind constantly longs for – salvation.

Another big area of concern of the current Report is the elaborating of the topic of Christian doctrine – the theme which the previous Report “Christian Believing” had put into forefront. Many assumptions were voiced anew, much attention was again devoted to the fact that the question of doctrine is extremely complicated, but a new degree of confidence within the Commission was achieved by the statement that in the context of Anglicanism it is quite possible to speak about its doctrine (but not necessarily about its distinctive doctrine) by referring to the Creeds and the Thirty-nine Articles as ‘the heart of ‘declared doctrine’ in the Church of England’<sup>20</sup>.

At the same time it has been noted several times throughout the Report that the doctrine of the Church is not something dry and accessible to the academicians only. To be a true Church, the Church has to act as a proclaiming church. And this is done first and foremost by means of the narrating everyone is confronted with during any of the services that take place in every Church of England parish church or in one of its many cathedrals. The biblical narrative naturally takes the major part of it, but what really needs to be stressed here is that this narrating, this ‘story-telling’ is a corporate activity, and this is how most of the believers take part in the Church’s life. This topic and its correlation with the theme of common prayer will be discussed in its own time – here there is space only to indicate that corporate narrating and prayer inevitably lead us to the big issue of the liturgy and its place in the Church of England and its teaching.

“Believing in the Church” tackled the question of corporate believing on three distinctive levels of analysis: first of all, from a broader philosophical position when all knowledge is seen as corporate in its origins and nature. Secondly, the issue of knowledge and truth was presented in Christian tradition, including liturgy and prayer.

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<sup>20</sup> *Believing in the Church*, 115.

And finally, the analysis was contextualised in Anglican tradition. The rest of Chapter 4 is the natural corollary of such an approach and the elaboration of how the corporate faith is professed by the Church of England.

## **b) Worship and doctrine in the Church of England.**

Both reports “Christian Believing” and “Believing in the Church” tackled the question of the Church’s teaching and the role that doctrine plays in the life of the Church. The difference between these two Reports and the following ones – “We Believe in God”, “We Believe in the Holy Spirit” and “The Mystery of Salvation” – is that the subsequent three Reports did not ask the question of meta-theology, whether it is possible at all to construct a specifically Anglican theology, but engaged with the task of constructing such. This enterprise itself should alert us to the fact that apart from the Reports, the Church of England issued several other documents where her position on the matter of Christian doctrine is voiced and stated.

Indeed, there are more documents which appeared and were commended for the Church which deal with doctrinal questions, without advertising the word ‘doctrine’ in their titles. All the rest of the current chapter will be an attempt to prove that most of the documents which regarded their subject matter as primarily liturgical in nature, were also inevitably of doctrinal importance.

Going back to the “Believing in the Church” Report, we can see in Chapter 5 “Where Shall Doctrine be Found?” a very helpful reflection upon different levels of the presence of doctrine in the life of the Church. Drawing along similar lines, the question where to look for the doctrine of the Church of England might be answered in a twofold manner. First of all, there is a declared doctrine, in the form of official definitions and Church’s statements, and secondly, there is also a confessed doctrine: what is meant here is the actual contents of the liturgy and prayers, the sum of affirmations every Anglican congregation makes every Sunday at least (as required by the Canon law).

The former should not be opposed to the latter, however purely academic those official documents and Reports published by the Church might sound and however more lively and down-to-earth the worship in some parishes might look<sup>21</sup>. In fact, those two aspects are inseparable from each other, as is shown by the title of the measure

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<sup>21</sup> It is interesting to compare the similarity in the position on the gender-inclusive language about God as it is present in Eucharistic Prayers and in the Report *We Believe in God* (London: Church House Publishing, 1987), 120.



itself, which regulates the forms of assent to the doctrine of the Church: "Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure" 1974. Putting the doctrine and the worship life of the Church under one coverage may seem unrealistic as one may claim that it puts the most important part of Church's life under too much legalistic pressure, cutting short all possible creative initiatives. That is why my objective here is to demonstrate that such a tension indeed exists. This, however, makes it even more necessary to start with the doctrine put into clear-cut formulae and declarations and only then proceed to analysing the role and nature of probably the biggest recent event in the Church of England, which has been ongoing since 1955 (the year when the Liturgical Commission was set up).

It is a very interesting topic to discuss all the judicial measures and procedures that blazed the trail for the liturgical revision in the Church of England. However, this is not the topic of the current research that is why this outline of how the process gradually went through must be very brief. Main attention will be paid to three papers presented to the General Synod of the Church of England that deal with the doctrine and also define the worship in the Church.

First of all, we look at "The Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure" 1974, which came into force on the 1<sup>st</sup> September 1975. Rubric 5 of the Measure re-states that 'The doctrine of the Church of England is grounded in the holy Scriptures, and in such teachings of the ancient Fathers and Councils of the Church as are agreeable to the said Scriptures. In particular such doctrine is to be found in the Thirty-nine Articles of Religion, the Book of Common Prayer, and the Ordinal'<sup>22</sup>. Once again the authority of the Scriptures is taken very seriously, and the question of the creeds is encouraged to be considered in a broader context of the heritage of the early Church and Ecumenical Councils (with a necessary provision for their agreement with the biblical teachings). It is of paramount importance to notice that three documents are given a special status in the exposition of doctrine, and two of them are liturgical and the third one (the Thirty-nine Articles) is bound under one cover with them.

A further and more detailed formula of the Church of England doctrine is to be found in the statement by the House of Bishops "The Nature of Christian Belief" (1986). Once again the bishops admitted a certain possible degree of diversity in the understanding and expression of the Christian faith, but they also aimed to defend the

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<sup>22</sup> Church of England, General Synod, *Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure 1974* (Kent: Wickham Press, 1973), 4.

position that the Church of England is true to the apostolic faith which it shares with other Christian traditions. The following formula was again offered: 'That faith is uniquely revealed in the Holy Scriptures, and set forth in the catholic Creeds, and to it the official formularies of the Church of England bear witness'<sup>23</sup>. This precise wording provides the basis for the bishops to affirm the Church's faith in the Resurrection, the empty tomb, the Incarnation and the Virginal Conception. A long history of debates, different emphases on doctrinal matters, and finally a verge of radical thinking and individual doubting in the 1960s and 1970s were at last answered by the Church by the means of defining a certain minimum that a Christian must profess. Otherwise it is a matter of the episcopal oversight to consider the question whether this person is still a member of the Church of England or not.

Another important document issued by the Church of England in the year 1986 was "Public Worship in the Church of England: A Guide to the law governing worship and doctrine in the Church of England". This concise document was designed to provide some guidelines for clergy and lay people alike about which forms of service may be used lawfully in the public worship and also what are the doctrinal implications. The purpose of this paper was to explain the "Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure" 1974 and to prove one more time that the matters of worship and doctrine should be dealt with in an entity.

A similar thought is also expressed in "The Worship of the Church", where the bonds between the basic dogmatic concept of Trinitarian theology and the worship and prayer life of the Church were established. This paper is more focused on practicalities of such an approach taken by the Church and it states the renewal of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity might 'well result in enriched baptismal and eucharistic rites'<sup>24</sup>. It also points out that the links can be also traced between the worship and ecclesiology. Worship and the Church's prayer are indeed a rich source of implicit doctrinal exposition.

The essence of what is the authorised doctrine of the Church of England is in the formula 'the faith which is revealed in the Holy Scriptures and set forth in the catholic creeds and to which the historic formularies of the Church of England bear witness', but

<sup>23</sup> Church of England, General Synod, *The Nature of Christian Belief: A Statement and Exposition by the House of Bishops of the General Synod of the Church of England* (London: Church House Publishing, 1986), 2.

<sup>24</sup> Church of England, Liturgical Commission *The Worship of the Church* G.S. Misc. 364 (London: Church House Publishing, 1991), 14.



it should be also noted that the Declaration of Assent carries on to state that this person to be ordained 'in public prayer and in administration of the sacraments... will use only the forms of service which are authorised or allowed by Canon' (Canon C15). This is the oath taken by clergy, readers and others, although the lay leaders of worship, whose numbers are increasing, are not obliged to do so.

So far in this thesis the doctrine of the Church of England has been analysed, as it is present in the Reports of the Doctrine Commission, in the polemics with a number of radical thinkers and in several official documents issued by the authority of the Church of England. Now it is time to consider, however briefly, the following aspects of the Church of England liturgical revision. First of all, the reasons that caused this revision and the actual procedure how the liturgical revision became a possibility.

### ***c) Liturgical revision in the Church of England and its legal foundation up to The Alternative Service Book 1980.***

It is all too easy to turn to the enumeration of quite a long list of documents and Prayer Books that came into being during the twentieth century either in the authorised or commended form, but the first and basic question is what exactly determines and regulates the worship of the Church of England nowadays. This is the Measure already mentioned above – the Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure, 1974. Now it is time to elucidate its liturgical contents.

According to this Measure, the Book of Common Prayer 1662 (referred to as the BCP elsewhere in this chapter) shall continue to be available for use in the Church of England. All other (alternative) forms of service are under the authority of the General Synod of the Church of England. More specifically, the General Synod can approve forms of service for use in the Church of England, amend forms of service which it has already approved, and continue or discontinue such services if the Synod thinks it is relevant. This applies not only to the forms of service, but also to collects, tables of lessons and rules for ordering services. The legal requirement is that such services or alterations must get the approval of the majority in each of the three Houses of the Synod – Bishops, Clergy and Laity – while not less than two thirds of those are present and voting.

In addition, the Convocations, the Archbishops and the Ordinary are entitled to authorise forms of service 'on special occasions'. The necessary requirement is that

these three entities must not contradict each other in their decisions: in practice it means that the Ordinary – in a parish church, a parish priest – may authorise a form of service if no provision has been made by the other authorities.<sup>25</sup>

Thus, the 1974 Church of England Measure is the ultimate source of the regulation of the Church of England worship, and even the BCP draws its exclusive status from the provisions of this Measure. This is no doubt a very comprehensive instrument of the formation of the worship life in the church, but in order to provide a thorough analysis, it would be useful to turn to some historic data regarding the matter of liturgical revision, even more so as this Measure is relatively recent.

The Act of Uniformity 1662 authorised the Prayer Book of 1662 (BCP) and therefore the replacement or the amendment of the BCP could only be achieved through the Act of Parliament. As the result of this, the main text of the 1662 Prayer Book remained, and still remains, virtually unaltered. The only option left was to try and change the usage of the Book, not the text itself, but this area was also under Parliamentary control. The 1870 Prayer Book Lectionary Book Act brought some changes to the BCP lectionary. The 1872 Act of Uniformity Amendment Act (or ‘the Shortened Services Act’) gave permission to the shortening to some services. But even in the first decades of the twentieth century all the Church of England was legally required to use the same 1662 Prayer Book.

But this state of affairs as far as the law was concerned, did not mean that all the Church was following exactly the same pattern. The BCP is obviously the product of the early years of the English Reformation and it bears all the marks of the sixteenth-century theological milieu. The turn of the century witnessed a big expansion of the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Church which led to the fact that a number of priests began using Roman missals for worship or started their own liturgical enterprise. As the result although the BCP was still heard on an average Sunday in an average parish church, the discontent grew. The Royal Commission, appointed in 1906 to investigate the state of things in the area of worship, reported that ‘the law of public worship in the Church of England is too narrow for the religious life of the present generation’<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>25</sup> Due to the lack of space, other provisions of the 1974 *Church of England Measure* (e.g. Royal Warrant) are not mentioned here.

<sup>26</sup> *The Alternative Service Book 1980. Services authorized for use in the Church of England in conjunction with the Book of Common Prayer together with The Liturgical Psalter* (Cambridge: Clowes/SPCK/Cambridge University Press, 1980), 9.

The need for the reform of the liturgy was seen as pressing, but due to all the legal procedure there was little hope the Parliament would agree to replace the BCP. It may be briefly noted there that the old Prayer Book also provided little assistance in evangelising the population of the new towns which spawned as a result of the Industrial Revolution, and hence the warning voices of the Anglican chaplains during the First World War that many of the soldiers were completely un-churched.

The 1919 Enabling Act finally delegated to the Church Assembly powers from the Parliament to legislate by Measure on any matter concerning the Church of England. But the main hindrance remained as the draft measure must have still been submitted to the both Houses of Parliament to seek its admission. But the Church of England was so much encouraged by this Act that almost immediately it tried to authorise a new Prayer Book and because of this the Church faced one of the fiercest crises in its history.

The whole programme was designed to broaden the liturgical basis of the Church of England in order to include the Anglo-Catholics' requirements and to prevent a possible danger of the church schism, but at the same time this alternative approach was severely restricted as the Church of England still was afraid to lose support from the Evangelical wing. This conundrum might have possibly been successfully resolved, but not in the Parliament which did not pay much attention to achieving any compromise in the life of the Church of England. The controversy brought about the result that although this new Prayer Book (the 'Deposited Book') was passed by the Church Assembly in 1927 and 1928, it was defeated in the Parliament in both years. This was by all means the major breach in the Church of England's self-confidence as an institution and as the established church, which contributed later to the whole agenda of revisiting Church-State relationships in the Church of England and is still the focus of attention. This is especially so now when Rowan Williams, the head of the disestablished Church in Wales, has been designated the next Archbishop of Canterbury.

The defeat of the 1928 Prayer Book was regarded as a state of crisis and the bishops had to utter the decisive word on this matter. They just could not afford one more humiliating procedure of trying to authorise this Prayer Book by gaining Parliament's assent. Their response to this situation was three-fold. First of all, the 1928 Prayer Book was published, but as a private venture, and it has always stayed in this capacity, never having any standing in law. Secondly, in 1929 the bishops issued a somewhat controversial statement which claimed that the usage of forms of service

from 1928 Prayer Book was believed not to contradict the common mind of the Church of England. Much was left to the area of diocesan bishops' competence in this matter, but the mere fact of a book of alternative services being available made many clergy quite keen on using it. But that situation could not be regarded as normal; the 1928 Book still never gained official status. That is why the bishops articulated their commitment to a longer-term programme, aimed at completely changing the procedure of authorising liturgical texts. In doing so the bishops started referring to a somewhat vague *ius liturgicum*, the Church's right to amend and supervise its own liturgical business. This authority was seen as parallel to those power exercised by the Parliament. The danger of this concept was that it might have easily been broadened to include the diocesan level where the local clergy would have regarded anything commended by the bishop as the mind of the whole Church. Although most bishops encouraged the clergy to use either the BCP or the material from the 1928 Prayer Book, the uniformity of worship was to a certain extent shattered.

Interest in liturgical matters gradually made its way on to the agenda of the whole Church and the following contributing factors may be named.

In 1945 one of the most influential twentieth century books on liturgy was published by Gregory Dix. His "Shape of Liturgy" focused on the basic structure of the eucharistic rite. The whole rite was regarded as one action, consisting of four moments: the taking of the bread and wine; the thanksgiving; the breaking of bread, and of giving. It might sound simple, even if not simplistic, but it had a huge resonance as many of those celebrating liturgy every week began to realise how far at times their own vision of the eucharist was from the biblical account. Another of Dix's major influences was his translation of one of the first evidences of the eucharist in the "Apostolic Tradition" by Hippolytus (dated c. 215). Dix's insights eventually found their place in the Alternative Service Book 1980 and can be traced especially in Eucharistic Prayer 3.

The works of the scholars like Gregory Dix represented what might be called an academic interest to the questions of worship. Far more practical were those who formed the so-called Liturgical Movement, the trend within the Church of England where theoretical and pastoral concerns were sought to be brought together. The four leading principles of the Liturgical Movement were: intelligibility, participation, simplicity, experimentation. Thus, this movement was largely oriented on the clergy participation and contribution into the worship – the idea, largely supported by the Church of England in its liturgical revision in the following years.



One of the consequences of this new interest in liturgy was also the appointment in 1955 of the Liturgical Commission with the role to deal with all liturgical matters and to report back to the Archbishops. The first work that the Commission did was the publication of the report “Principles of Prayer Book Revision” for the 1958 Lambeth Conference and “Baptism and Confirmation” in 1959.

Another two factors which affected the course of the revision that the Church of England undertook were overseas revision (which indicated the desire of the churches from the former British Empire to seek their own Prayer Books and to put to an end English dominance in the language and topics of worship) and also a wide variety of books dedicated to the studies of patristics. Much more material on the practices of the early church was available and now there appeared a problem how to manage this material and if it was possible to insert it into the modern usage.

All those factors pressed upon the Church of England to look for another way to take the legal power from the Parliament so to enable the Church to handle its own liturgical business.

In 1965 the Prayer Book (Alternative and Other Services) Measure was introduced which gave the Church authority to issue services, alternative to the BCP, and to put them into a trial throughout the Church. Apart from its focus on a purely ‘experimental’ use of the forms of service, the Measure contained one more constraint: its authority was to expire in 1980. But that was the real beginning of the legal process which carried on to publishing the 1974 Measure which is currently regulating the worship in the Church of England and all the alterations to it.

The year 1974 was also the official end of *ius liturgicum*, as now the worship of the whole Church is once again aimed at being uniform, though definitely understood in the way different to the one existing in the Church of England for more than three hundred years with the BCP as the only standard. The uniformity according to the 1974 Measure does not mean a total denial of creativity on a local or diocesan level – and those options have already been discussed above – but this time a special provision was made in the Measure itself for such creativity. This provision should not be considered as the Church’s attempt as an establishment to obtain control over all the spheres of its life, but it may be rather seen as a wise acknowledgement of a certain degree of diversity which occurred within the Church and the following attempt to embrace this diversity for the sake of enrichment and further exploration within the set limits.

After the 1974 Church of England (Worship and Doctrine) Measure obtained legal status and power, the main aspiration of the Church of England was to prepare and issue a new Prayer Book, which would have been a long-awaited project of expressing the truth of Christianity anew and in the way understandable and appealing to the 'present generation'.

This objective sounds identical to the objectives and aims of the intellectual enterprises, which were discussed in the previous chapter. It is important to note that the same driving power was behind the publishing all those theological texts, both radical and apologetic, which followed "Honest to God" by J.A.T. Robinson, or even an earlier Vidler's "Soundings". Let me briefly indicate the major differences between these two areas of theological creativity, which is of special relevance to this research project. The texts that were given attention earlier in Chapters 2 and 3 are all very important for the Church of England in the 1960s and 1970s, and many of the authors pursuing the critical trend even felt that they were able to speak about a new Reformation, when the modern world-view and modern way of writing theology seemed to give way to something new, commonly and somewhat vaguely called in the 1990s 'post-modernism'. But the point, especially evident in the debate following the publication of "The Myth of God Incarnate", is that the gap between such 'theology' and what really concerned an average churchgoer appeared to become impassable. Similarly, however sadly, those Trinitarian insights that are present in the Reports by the Doctrine Commission were not efficiently conveyed to the vast majority of practising Anglicans. On the contrary, the most familiar things for the Church still remained those words that are said or sung during the service by the minister or the whole congregation. And this is a very difficult task indeed to try and trace what influenced all the new forms of service that became more and more widespread from the late 1960s. The question remained: 'How did worship and doctrine co-exist at that time?'

One of the most popular services in the Church of England at that time still was Morning Prayer. The Liturgical Movement brought eucharistic liturgy back to the scope of attention to a certain extent. But the most popular service in late 1960s and early 1970s undoubtedly was a new type of worship, especially designed for the whole family and for all age groups ideally. The fact that there was no such service produced by the



Church of England brought into being a wide range of services, which were largely self-made flexible hymn compilations, but a said service and liturgy shortly followed<sup>27</sup>.

Those services were very popular, especially in urban parishes, but they also caused many questions about their doctrinal acceptance as well. The Church of England could not make its doctrine in forms of the Reports or official statements efficiently familiar to numbers of its adherents, even to those ever-growing numbers of the lay people who discovered new ministries in the Church becoming available for them at that time. And its most popular form of service was the one going too far adrift at times from what the Church could accept. This was the most important reason the Church looked towards the revision of the BCP with so much hope.

#### **d) *The Alternative Service Book 1980.***

After the 1974 Measure the legislation procedures of the Church of England started to move towards the major project of creating a new Prayer Book, which from the outset was seen not as one replacing the BCP completely, but as providing alternative forms of service alongside with the traditional Book of Common Prayer. Hence the title: “The Alternative Service Book 1980” (referred to as the ASB elsewhere in this chapter).

There were three sets of revised liturgical material that blazed the trail for the ASB: Series 1 (1966) (a full title is the “First Series of Alternative Services”), Series 2 (1967-8) and Series 3 (1973-9) alternatively. Let me very briefly provide an outline of those texts.

The reason that Series 1 was completed and published so fast was that most of its contents was derived from the 1928 Prayer Book. This was the first time that the new procedure of authorising the revised liturgical text was applied, and the only time when it was put to a trial: the House of Laity rejected it first time by failing to provide a two-thirds majority, so the decision was made to come back for a year to using the 1662 Prayer Book solely. The actual Series 1 services that were authorised were Morning and Evening Prayer, Infant and Adult Baptism, Marriage, Burial and the Holy Communion. Though largely taken from the 1928 Prayer Book, none of it was identical to the 1928 material.

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<sup>27</sup> See, for instance: *Family Worship* (London, 1971, revised edition 1975); Perry, M., (ed.), *Church Family Worship* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986).



Series 2 were the work of the Liturgical Commission and sought to gain the Synod authorisation, but for different reasons the whole set of services failed to get the final approval as well. Therefore, Series 2 never was a complete service, and the different services were authorised to be used for relatively brief periods – three years for Morning and Evening Prayer, and four for Holy Communion and Baptism and Confirmation.

During the preparation for the Series 3 two main events happened. First of all, the 1974 Measure came into force, starting a long-term process of current liturgical legislation. And secondly, the need was acknowledged of introducing modern English into the worship. The publication of the Prayer Books in the USA (1977) and Australia (1978) further proved the latter point. So the Series 3 material was designed with the view of introducing it later into a new Prayer Book for the Church of England. Although ‘thou’-form was changed in most services, one ‘non-you’ service was also included in order to help many people accept the new Book more easily and to stress the historical succession with traditional Anglican forms of liturgy.

From all the Series revised material only the Series 3 Holy Communion service (commonly known as the “Green Booklet”) was subjected to a full-scale revision with the questionnaires sent to the parishes in winter 1976/77. All the rest of the services were taken in as one pack. November 1980 was chosen as a start for a ten period of authorisation and finally the ASB took its place alongside the 1662 Prayer Book.

Now as a brief outline of the liturgical revision up till 1980 has been given, it is time to point out what were the merits for the Church in introducing the Alternative Service Book.

First of all, it provided a greater variety for different forms of service: for instance, four eucharistic prayers. It left open for the local clergy a number of possibilities about how to build a particular service, so that even for one congregation there could be several variants of the same service. The aim here was to equip a church with a certain degree of flexibility, having outlined at the same time a limited number of the variations to follow. The plan was to make the liturgy of the Church of England understandable for a modern worshipper without ruining the uniformity of services within the Church and avoiding breaking from traditional English rites, some of which could be traced back as far as the Sarum Use.

Secondly, the services provided were in modern language (with one exception). This was designed for more mission-minded churches to take them on board. Also



much was taken in from the scholarly research and from the enriched and more accurate vision of the early Christian liturgical tradition.

Finally, a vast range of material was introduced that the parishes could initially choose from – the BCP, the ASB and the Series material – so that a larger diversity would be still accomplished in a mood of uniformity. After 1985 the number of the authorised Series services was substantially narrowed by the Synod<sup>28</sup>, but there was more up-to-date material to follow.

But with all the advantages of the ASB, the Liturgical Commission was set up again after its publishing and it carried on working. For some people it seemed a bit odd at that stage as the Church of England finally got the alternative to the BCP, which was done with a richer scope, in a modern language and in one book so that congregations could more easily adapt the new Prayer Book and still have only one volume at the pew (though a very bulky one).

But the Commission discovered soon that it was called to a bigger agenda than merely proposing the material which had no time to be presented to the Synod with the rest of the ASB. “The Ministry to the Sick” (1983) was the only amendment to the ASB, and in fact the only amendment, which had been prepared by the old Liturgical Commission. For it soon became clear that the ASB was not perfect and had its own serious shortcomings.

The ASB played a very important part in the life of the Church of England. It was the official Prayer Book, alongside with the BCP, for twenty years, as its period of authorisation was extended in 1985 till 31 December 2000. The ASB also showed that the Church was ready to accept a new way of doing things by allowing a greater diversity in the matters of liturgy. It was a whole programme of reassessing the liturgical heritage of the Church of England, which was accomplished in a modern language, but aiming at articulating the Trinitarian core of Christian worship.

And still, the need to revise the ASB in the nearest future was expressed from many quarters of the Church of England. Several reasons may be enumerated, as follows:

First of all, as far as the language of the worship is concerned, the ASB was introduced before the arrival of the inclusive language so that later following the pattern

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<sup>28</sup> In 1985 the General Synod narrowed the range of choice between the BCP, the ASB and the surviving ‘Series’ material to that of *Series One Matrimony and Burial services* and *Series Two Baptism and Confirmation services* alongside the authorised BCP and ASB.

first set in the USA, some of the ASB formulae were seen as non-sensitive and even abusive. One of the examples is the sentence used by the minister in Prayers of Penitence, The Order for Holy Communion, Rite A: 'Let us confess our sins... and to live in love and peace with all men'<sup>29</sup>. The ASB seems to use such language even more widely than the BCP at times. Moreover, there were requests to change the whole idiom, as the language that the ASB used was regarded by many as rather flat and plain.

This was also one of the arguments that the supporters of the BCP commonly used to criticise the ASB when they appealed to the richness of the BCP language and the variety of the symbols and metaphors one could find there. On the contrary, the modernised and functional language of the ASB certainly needed some counterbalance in introducing a more imaginative style.

Another of the reasons given for replacing the ASB was the need for even greater flexibility. In many parish churches people suddenly realised what a treasure they possess, and that this treasure can be used today in a beautiful and challenging way. That is why new resources for indicating how the new service forms might contribute on a local level were also in big demand.

Many people also claimed that there ought to be some fresh thinking on Christian initiation and other rites, as those were the forms of service where the ASB was never strong and thus they were unpopular among local clergy.

And the last point to make: the liturgical rites introduced by the ASB were definitely to a big extent influenced by the limited set of ideas which were popular in the 1970s, for instance, following the rite of Hyppolitus. Once the time passed, they all seemed rather dated. Moreover, at times it looked like the liturgical rite itself and the accompanying prayers were created separately, with little concern for mutual balance and interconnection. Some of the prayers introduced for the Church's usage were new, some were derived from the ancient sources, but what gradually appeared to become a very important issue was the question of how to find and maintain the right balance and escape this danger of overloading a service, or making it too light and thin.

The debate over the issue of what should happen to the ASB took the shape of numerous questioning and exploring new liturgical possibilities, and of course there was a huge amount of work from the Liturgical Commission's side that accompanied this debate.

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<sup>29</sup> *The Alternative Service Book 1980*, 127.

## **e) Towards Common Worship.**

The Liturgical Commission produced in the 1980s and early 1990s several books, which marked a different approach to worship compared with that which the designers of the ASB followed. This time there was no need to be in a hurry and produce a draft of one more reformed Prayer Book. The most pressing demand was for good quality seasonal material. The response of the Church was given in two reports: “Lent, Holy Week, Easter” in 1986 and “The Promise of His Glory” in 1990.

The core of “Lent, Holy Week, Easter” consists of five full liturgies for principal holy days – Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Easter. Although boasting of some very nice samples of poetic language of worship, this Report certainly aimed at attracting more attention to symbolic action as well. A brand new feature of this document was a new way of presenting the liturgical material: under one cover was collected both authorised and ‘commended’ material. That was done primarily in order to simplify the process of carrying the new material through the General Synod procedure. As every member of the Synod is entitled to introduce an amendment to the new liturgical setting before it is due to be authorised and as those amendments had a tendency to accumulate from one debate to another, it might have taken too much time to complete and issue “Lent, Holy Week and Easter”. And a wide recognition that this Report gained indicated that there was a substantial demand for seasonal material, and so the work in this area was carried on.

“The Promise of His Glory: Services and Prayers for the Season from All Saints to Candlemas” was published in 1990 and is also a rich resource for creating seasonal forms of services. But it was obviously different from “Lent, Holy Week, Easter” in many ways. First, it did not look back at the ASB, but rather aimed at a future provision. Second, the question of liturgical language was dealt with in a way of looking for a more poetic and metaphorical expression of familiar formulas. And finally, the structure of the services was different: alongside fully-fledged services there was present what might be called a directory approach to the service forms. The Report provided no more than a structure for some particular services and then offered a range of possible options to fill in. This new approach is also widely used in another, probably the most influential report, of that decade, “Patterns for Worship”<sup>30</sup>.

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<sup>30</sup> Church of England, Liturgical Commission, *Patterns for Worship* (London: Church House Publishing, 1989 as Report GS 898, 1995 as a revised edition together with “A Service of the Word”).

“Lent, Holy Week, Easter” and “Promise of His Glory” were widely appreciated as a fine enrichment to the services in the ASB. Alongside complete services for special occasions (Palm Sunday, All Souls’ Day and so on) they contain resource material for the services throughout the year: prayers, canticles, intercessions, sentences to introduce the peace and other resources. In addition both documents have alternative lectionaries.

“Patterns for Worship” should be analysed in close connection with two previous books as it also contains a great deal of seasonal material. The publication of “Patterns for Worship” in 1989 as a Synod occasional paper was the answer for the aspirations and recommendations of the numerous reports and documents, published by the Church of England in late 1980s. Thus, for instance, the Report “Faith in the City” (1986) on UPAs (Urban Priority Areas) aired the critical stance on how the ASB is received in these areas: the members of the commission which produced the Report noted that to give people a 1300 page book is to reveal a gulf between the Church and its people, but also to hinder the task of evangelism in inner city areas. “Patterns for Worship” also took note of the Report “Children in the Way” (1988) and “Called to be Adult” (1987) as well as a number of other recommendations.

As a result of this, the aims of “Patterns for Worship” were formulated in the following way: ‘(a) to provide some indication of different ways of doing liturgy...; (b) to indicate where advantage might be taken of notes and rubrics in the ASB to develop and enrich the liturgy; (c) to provide outline structures and mandatory sections for some services... for those who wish either to enrich or shorten the services’<sup>31</sup>. The structure of the Report is that of a directory (the feature, followed by “Promise of His Glory”) and consists of four main sections.

First, the guidance is provided by the Outlines and Instructions for both eucharistic and non-eucharistic services. Second, there was a set of sample services. Third, the “Resource Section”, which included a lot of versatile resource material, including four alternative eucharistic prayers. And finally, the commentary, which aimed at helping people to think through possible arrangement of the services and issues what can be a good or a bad practice for every single church, unique with its particular building, architecture, tradition and community.

If the ASB was a definite move away from the uniformity of the BCP, “Patterns for Worship” are hardly to be underestimated in its importance for the Church of

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<sup>31</sup> *Patterns for Worship: A Report by the Liturgical Commission of the General Synod of the Church of England* GS 898 (London: Church House Publishing, 1989), v.



England worship and following publication of “Common Worship”. “Patterns for Worship” certainly indicated a desire of many in the Church for a greater flexibility and serve as a very positive and methodologically sensitive enterprise to make this idea embedded in the Church’s everyday practice.

Although not all material from “Patterns for Worship” was authorised for the usage in the Church of England, this Report is outstanding in both number and variety of the material proposed.

The overall trend is evident: from the uniformity of the BCP through the authorised number of the variants and alternatives in the ASB to an overwhelming variety of seasonal and resource material presented in “Lent, Holy Week, Easter”, “Promise of His Glory” and “Patterns for Worship”. So the next step, the new Prayer Book to replace the ASB in 2000, obviously had to follow this path: the responses received from all over the Church of England proved that there remained the appetite for resource material of good quality.

It is interesting to follow how the ethos of the consequent liturgical revision was built in those three Reports that have been just briefly analysed. The ASB was a major liturgical and theological enterprise to offer a completely new (alternative) set of the forms of service in comparison with what the Church of England was using under the BCP rite. But still it had to be only one option or the other. These three seasonal and resourceful reports, which followed the ASB, aimed to provide a much more flexible idiom for the Church to acquire. The number of the options grew rapidly. The liturgy gradually became a creative activity and vocation to explore for the whole Church; new aspects of the worship came to light and demanded attention (for instance, the use of silence or symbolic gestures/postures during the service). But the more versatile and abundant this ‘package’ of the liturgy became, the more evident it was that such a development and growth in diversity can take place only on the basis of a firm and common core, otherwise a totally unproductive havoc could take the place of this creative activity.

The topic of the tension or better say, interrelation between this common and pretty stable core and a rapidly evolving bulk of the revision material also was discussed at length by the members of the Liturgical Commission in the book “The

Renewal of Common Prayer”<sup>32</sup>. This topic and a whole set of questions concerning the nature of the liturgical revision process itself were raised once again during the preparation and after the actual publication of “Common Worship”.

The year 1997 was the starting point for the General Synod as it was agreed that as the ASB expires in 2000, preparation was starting for the new Prayer Book. Certain concerns about the language of the worship were raised, and in this matter the Church of England was to a high degree influenced by new texts prepared and discussed ecumenically. The language of “Common Worship” finally became gender-inclusive, but still remained Church of England, as the General Synod rejected some of the international translations (notably in the Lord’s Prayer and the Nicene Creed). Which means that there is some work to be done in this direction in the years to come.

The question of the format of the new Prayer Book was very much an inner affair for the Church of England, where little reference could be made to the overseas experience. As the Liturgical Commission faced some criticisms (for instance, the “Faith in the City” Report) and some constructive ideas about how the material is to be organised to enable a maximum number of people to follow it easily, the new structure began to emerge. Instead of having one book, the Church decided to have a whole series. First and foremost, because of the volume of material itself, which made a one-book production virtually impossible. And second, it became a matter of pastoral concern. With the arrival of multi-media very soon people began to realise new major possibilities of producing services for every parish or even for particular services (like the Renewal of Baptismal Vows, for example) on separate leaflets. It cost virtually nothing as soon as the necessary equipment was arranged, but people could take those leaflets home to keep or to give out. The service was easy to follow and additional space could be used for church notices, or invitations for parish events, or even for providing prayers for the whole week to come! At the same time some parishes started experimenting with some other media (screen projectors, Power Point presentations, etc) to take the emphasis from the text and try something else.

So the Church of England in 1997 began the process of replacing the ASB by means of producing the whole range of books: first came “Calendar, Lectionary and Collects” (1997), followed by “Initiation Services” (1998) and a slightly revised “A Service of the Word” in 1999. And finally in 2000 the ASB gave way to a whole series

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<sup>32</sup> Perham, M., (ed.), *The Renewal of Common Prayer: Unity and Diversity in Church of England Worship* (London: SPCK, 1993), part 2.

of services – “Holy Communion”, “Wholeness and Healing”, “Marriage”, “Thanksgiving for the Gift of a Child”, and “Funeral Services”. According to the General Synod plan, a number of other services were to be prepared by the Liturgical Commission in the nearest future: “Daily Prayer”, “Common Worship material for Ordination”, etc.

The major difference between the introduction of the ASB and “Common Prayer” into the Church of England was that the times have changed considerably. When the ASB was first introduced, on a grassroots level people sometimes did not know exactly what to do in order to use the liturgical freedom they were given. A more conservative wing of the Church saw the ASB as a danger for the BCP usage and for the whole common basis which hold the Church of England together as one distinctive church. But in the year 2000 the majority of the worshippers, clergy and laity alike, were literally brought up in the Church, which has been for them on a constant move, and so there was nothing wrong in principle in the enterprise of introducing a more accurate and amended new forms of service. Liturgical revision itself stopped being the Parliament’s prerogative and started being exercised church-wide.

This last point can be further validated by the well-documented fact that parallel with this seemingly inexhaustible list of the Common Worship material, many of the Church of England parishes carried on experimenting on a wider scale as well. As far as legislation is concerned, after the 1994 revision of the liturgical canons the archbishops gave their permission for more than 800 parishes to have a trial for some of the services, introduced later in “Common Worship”. The archbishops used Canon B5A for this purpose.

But alongside it, even more initiative was shown locally. Some Anglo-Catholics traditionally turned to the material stemming from Roman Catholic liturgical revision, occasionally using the Focolare resources as well. Much more attention in the Church of England in the 1990s gained prayer and spiritual material from the Iona community, from Taizé and from what is broadly called Celtic spirituality. The Society of Saint Francis in 1992 produced their own version of the Daily Service under the title “Celebrating Common Prayer”, which also got a wide appraisal in the Church of England.

Two trends here are worth noticing. Under the current Canon law the Church of England worship must contain the Morning and Evening Prayer, pronounced daily, but as far as other prayers are concerned, the clergy are free to introduce what they and their

local bishop believe to be appropriate. So there is nothing illegal in leading a night prayer with Taizé chants or using Celtic patterns for Intercessions and reflecting upon the whole of creation. And this real demand aiming at enriching prayer life and daily worship was met by the material from many different directions: modern hymns and songs for Charismatics, Celtic prayers from the Holy Island Lindisfarne (especially those compiled by David Adam) or from Iona Community, Taizé chants and prayers, manuals on different types of spirituality.

Another trend looks much more ambiguous: to name only one example, although the liturgical rite produced by Iona Community can be used on the Island of Iona, strictly speaking it has no right to exist in the Church of England service. The quest for spirituality cannot be undertaken at the cost of abandoning of what is authorised for the use in the Church of England as it violates the vows given by the clergy at their ordination and the multiplicity of resources in modern practice does not mean permissiveness. This problem is especially acute for the so-called 'alternative worship',<sup>33</sup>.

"Common Worship", with its outlined core of texts and additional forms of service to accompany it, aims at finding the right balance between old and new, traditional and relevant for modern culture. This is reflected in both the structure of "Common Worship" and the language it uses. All this contributes to the theology of "Common Worship" and of the liturgical revision in general. This is the basic subject which is going to be considered now as it seems to be a natural corollary after the outline of the legal process of the liturgical material authorisation has been provided and the whole long process from the 1928 Prayer Book to "Common Worship" has been briefly depicted.

### ***f) Theology of liturgical revision.***

One of the striking features of the "Common Worship" material is that every service and sometimes even single rubrics are equipped with theological reflection on this particular form of service. References to the tradition of the early church and to the practice of other major denominations are sometimes also provided. If the alteration occurs, it is often explained. These theological remarks precede the pastoral notes about how to organise the actual service and form a framework within which the pastoral

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<sup>33</sup> See Roberts, P., *Alternative Worship in the Church of England* Grove Worship Series, No. 155 (Cambridge: Grove Books, October 1999), especially 22-24.



issues are to be dealt with. Again due to the public debate in the General Synod when the new forms of service are discussed, the members of the Liturgical Commission were obliged to make the underlying liturgical theology clear and well grounded.

This serious approach to theology as it is presented and proclaimed in liturgy has already been noted while discussing the work of the Doctrine Commission and it is true about the Liturgical Commission as well, however different the subjects of these two Commissions might at first appear. Not only does the Liturgical Commission refer to the matters of doctrinal truth and adequacy in its work, but the opposite process takes place as well: for instance, “We Believe in the Holy Spirit” says much about the nature and character of charismatic style of worship too.

The task to provide here a detailed textual analysis of the BCP, the ASB and “Common Worship” material with the objective of discerning their doctrinal particular strongholds seems to be unrealistic. This task requires very specific knowledge, more space and also it does not match aims and objectives of the current research. At the same time just as the Reports of the Doctrine Commission are the expression of the Church’s voice on the matters of Christian doctrine, the liturgical texts are also the proclamation of what the Church of England believes to be true and necessary for salvation. Ideally, the approach should be holistic as it is argued that the doctrine of the Church of England is equally present in its official statements and its liturgy<sup>34</sup> (another area where the doctrine is proclaimed is the hymnology, but this would be a completely separate subject of research).

In worship the congregation hears the Scriptures and is invited to reiterate the basics of the Christian faith. The Word of God is proclaimed and the response of God’s own people follows. Every worshipper can participate in the Communion – the mystery, which no theologian so far dared to unveil totally. Liturgy is said or sung by the whole Church, but it is more than words at the same time. What the worship contains is very important for what the Church believes and must be taken into account when any serious researcher aims at discussing the Church of England theology.

As one of the priorities of this thesis is considering the Trinitarian aspect of the doctrine, it seems appropriate to start with it.

As regarding the theology of the ASB, it is hard to say anything more than to come up with a mere statement that the ASB and “The Myth of God Incarnate” were

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<sup>34</sup> See Sykes, SW, *The Integrity of Anglicanism* (New York: Seabury Press, 1978), 99ff.

created and published at roughly the same time and shared the same cultural and philosophical milieu. It would be an evident exaggeration to claim that the ASB was the response to “The Myth of God Incarnate” and its debate – the objectives and goals of the ASB were completely different than mere hidden polemics – but it is instructive to notice that the language of the ASB is quite other than the “The Myth of God Incarnate”. On the contrary, it is predominantly Trinitarian and incarnational in its nature! An example of this can be the newly introduced hymn ‘O Gladsome Light’ in Evening Prayer which praises all Three Persons of the Trinity and their mutual relations<sup>35</sup>.

There are plenty of examples which can be given here, and they cannot be regarded as samples of obsolete language usage, however ‘modern’ the authors of the “The Myth of God” might have sounded, because long after the publicity of the discussion immediately ignited by the “The Myth of God” came to a standstill, the matters of liturgical language still were widely discussed.

When the revision of the ASB was discussed in the Church of England, the Trinitarian doctrine took its place as a necessary basis for liturgical development and it was also admitted that this dogmatic concept is of particular interest for the life of prayer in general and especially for the initiation and eucharistic rites<sup>36</sup>. The resurgence of the interest in Trinitarian theology brought considerable enrichment to many areas of liturgy in the Church of England.

When the “Common Worship” material was on the preparation stage, the most obvious case of the need for a very precise theological wording was the introduction of new Eucharistic prayers. The process of revision started in 1995<sup>37</sup> but came to a halt when the House of Laity in the General Synod refused to vote for their usage. The reasons were partly pastoral, but mostly theological. As the result of this, certain compromise had to be achieved while authorising those prayers for the inclusion into “Common Worship”. During the debate on the epiclesis in Prayer E not only theology, but politics of the revision as well became evident. The original version of Prayer E contained the explicit epiclesis, both consecration (on the gifts) and communion one (on the worshippers), as it was evident in the following lines: ‘send your Holy Spirit on us

<sup>35</sup> “We see the evening light,...//Father of might unknown,//Thee, his incarnate Son,//And Holy Spirit adoring.” in *The Alternative Service Book* 1980, 63.

<sup>36</sup> Church of England, Liturgical Commission, *The Worship of the Church* (London: CHP, 1991), 14.

<sup>37</sup> See Church of England, House of Bishops, *Eucharistic Prayers* GS 1120 (London: CHP, 1995); Holton, D. (ed.), *Reviewing the Anglican Eucharist: Findings of IALC/5 Dublin, 1995* Grove Series, No. 135 (Cambridge: Grove Books, 1996).

and these gifts that broken bread and wine outpoured may be for us the body and blood of your dear Son'<sup>38</sup>. As it caused too much a controversy for different parties in the Church of England, there was made a decision to re-formulate this line, and to remove the epiclesis from the prayer completely. In line with liturgical theology it was felt by the members of the Commission that it was not appropriate to have an epiclesis on the congregation (which was not the matter of controversy) without an epiclesis on the gifts linked to it. Although the resulting form of the prayer was considered by some people as a disappointment, the overall process was still based on the Trinitarian model and all amendments or possible alterations should have been corrected accordingly.

All eight Eucharistic prayers are the result of both meticulous theological thinking and the attempt to meet pastoral and very practical concerns. The language that depicts Godhead and especially Jesus Christ became more gender-sensitive and imaginative (especially Prayer G: 'the silent music of your praise', 'as a mother tenderly gathers her children', 'a living temple to your glory'). The number of new prayers also reflects an increase in the number of structures: whereas the ASB prayers mostly conformed to two types, "Common Worship" includes Prayer F which is based on the Liturgy of St Basil and Prayer H, which is an interactive prayer when about one third of it is said by the congregation.

Apart from the words themselves, the structure and logical emphasis of the service are also very significant. Whereas some charismatic services may put too much stress on the Persons of the Trinity separately and rarely note their mutual movement and action, while the 'family services' laid primary stress on depicting Jesus Christ as human and tried to escape the mystery of the Trinity, "Common Worship" attempted at redressing the balance and at giving every of the Three Persons the appropriate place and the role to take.

The Eucharistic prayers are also a very good example how corporate the worship is seen nowadays. Extended prefaces and alternative responses seek to bring the congregation together and lead it in prayer and praise. Prayer H is especially significant in this aspect: it is interactive in structure and it also concludes with the sanctus. Thus the prayer is gradually being built into a climax of praising God.

The intention of "Common Worship" was also to bring together the newest development in the Church of England worship and the long venerable tradition of

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<sup>38</sup> Ch. Read *No way to run a railway' – Revisiting the Eucharist for Common Worship* in ANVIL, Vol. 17, No. 4 (2000), 263.

English liturgy. In fact there is not more variety in “Common Worship” than there was in the BCP and the ASB. The four orders in “Common Worship” include two that follow the BCP communion pattern and two that follow the ASB. Both structures are provided in contemporary and traditional language. So the whole range works out as follows:

‘Order 1 is Rite A shape in contemporary language (the new Rite A)

Order 1A is Rite A shape in traditional language (the new Rite B)

Order 2 is BCP shape in traditional language (the Prayer Book ‘as used’)

Order 2A is BCP shape in contemporary language (the new Rite A according to the pattern of the BCP),<sup>39</sup>

So we can speak about liturgy being corporate on two levels: first of all as it is evident from the four orders for eucharist in “Common Worship” there is no discrepancy between the BCP, the ASB and finally “Common Worship”. The BCP pattern and language are preserved, and the enrichment to the eucharist came from ecumenical sources (Eucharistic Prayer G) or even the Eastern rite (Prayer F). That is why it is possible to say that the Church of England as a whole is still praying as part and parcel of the Christian Church. So the corporate Christian tradition is there.

On the second level, the eucharist alongside other rites is designed as a corporate activity *per se* for every congregation. A parish priest may choose a particular pattern of a service to follow (or a compilation drawn from different sources), but the ideal is that the congregation as a whole takes part in the service. On a practical basis this trend is reflected in the increase of the lay activity during the preparation and celebration alike. On a structural level many services aim at reaffirming and strengthening the corporate identity: washing each other’s feet on Maundy Thursday, involving the whole congregation into baptismal and confirmation rites, following the example of minister’s confession in Prayers of Penitence, etc.

All those actions are supported by many collective responses during the services, but as actions can speak their own powerful language, this corporate activity should always be regained and endorsed where it lacks. Contemporary guidelines to the Church of England worship aim at making use not only of the words, but also of music, gesture, posture and even silence.

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<sup>39</sup> Ch. Read ‘No way to run a railway’, 261.



All this corporate activity inevitably leads to reassessment of the notion of the common core and common prayer.

With this overwhelming richness of resources available now in the Church of England the other side of the matter should not be forgotten: too much permissiveness could lead to deteriorating of the Church of England's liturgy and a weakening of the Church of England identity. This creative industry of liturgical writing may bring more harm than good when the revisions are done for their own sake. Some of the services are closer to their own character and design when the creativity is actually restricted. Whereas the traditional words and formulae of the BCP provided a framework a worshipper could know by heart and follow easily, this is not the case with "Common Worship". The main direction was to move away from regarding mostly words as the essentials and to start emphasising the structure of the service. So vary the formulae used, but keep the family resemblance in the structure.

The same applies to a long-known notion of 'common prayer'. For the future identity of Anglicanism it is of vital importance to make sure that although different parts of the Church pray in a different manner (or even a different language, as is often the case in the inner city areas with big immigrant communities), but following the same pattern, the same stance and ethos. The same structure of worship is quite difficult to discern, and even more difficult to provide in the way so that the service itself would not look artificial. But if this core area is not defined, the Anglican identity may be easily lost in the sea of constant liturgical change when different parishes are joined together on the basis of a close location or mere convenience.

The New Testament knew several forms of worship. The BCP was actually used in a way, at times drastically different from the one prescribed. It would be a mistake to regard the BCP as a homogeneous text, free from all possible diversity<sup>40</sup>. But as "Common Worship" actually allows a greater degree of flexibility, this common core should be present in the Church's mind and cared for.

### **g) Conclusion.**

The Church of England liturgy can be considered as its doctrine in the dispersed form. As the doctrine is in constant need of refining and formulating anew (the *reformatata reformanda* principle), the worship follows the same direction. Liturgical and

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<sup>40</sup> Perham, M., (ed.) *The Renewal of Common Prayer: Unity and Diversity in Church of England Worship. The essays by the Liturgical Commission* (London: SPCK, 1993), 10ff.

doctrinal matters must be considered together in close interrelation, as became especially clear during the liturgical revision (1966 - 2000), and as most probably will be the case in the years to come.

The liturgical revision in the Church of England demonstrated its adherence to the Christian doctrine and has enjoyed a longer life than the purely intellectual controversies of the 1960s and 1970s. The Church of England proclaims its doctrine in different official documents and prays it through in its worship.

Incarnational controversies, Charismatic emphasis on the Holy Spirit and its work, 'family services' with their popular and simplified account of the Christian message all influenced the progress of liturgical revision, but the Church of England firmly aimed at following the Trinitarian model in order to secure its identity. Elaborate theology underlies the liturgical revision process and again it is largely Trinitarian-based. Numerous examples of this are the doxologies, the different forms of the Gloria, forms of responsorial address, etc.

The authorised forms of the services and many prayers are seen now more as a matrix, a structure to be filled with words, actions or silence so that as a result there will be a movement of prayer with its climaxes and inner logic of development. As more and more options are available, the stable core of the worship needs to be defined.

This common core consists of the proclamation of a set of shared beliefs and of a certain common action, both of which help build a Christian fellowship and community, where the Word of God is heard, the will of God is taken into the heart and Christians can undertake a faith journey in mutual love, respect and enrichment.

The worship also poses the questions about the church itself: the initiation and baptismal rites actually set the boundaries of what it means to belong to the church and also elucidate the nature of the church.

But this corporate Christian worship is like Christian believing in one more way. Although the core of mandatory liturgy is pretty minimalistic in its demands the tension between individual and corporate still remains. What might be seen as a solution here is the model of the church which is quite open to changes and which longs to be relevant for the newcomers. But at the same time there is another tension between a fairly traditional model of worship and a 'modern' model of worship, very much sensitive to the changing world. The right balance is hard to maintain here and it requires a constant restating.

Worship plays a part in the life of the Church of England which is hard to underestimate, but the Church of England will still need to decide in the nearest future what makes this worship Christian, Anglican and Church of England respectively and what are the boundaries for such a definition.

Worship and doctrine are inseparable and without the analysis of the liturgical revision it is hard to assess the scope of interest towards Trinitarian theology and spirituality. Worship is also a corporate activity by its nature and a clear manifestation of the role which corporate activity plays in the life of the whole Church.

On the other hand worship is more than a mere corporate activity performed by the Church where a doctrinal position is declared. Rather the ultimate nature and goal of worship is not individual-centred (otherwise it is just one more 'spirituality development' tool) or congregation-centred – neither it is even Church-centred. The centre of worship is God, His call and the human response to this call. However limited, the most appropriate response to this would be praise, obedience and adoration – something possible to express, but not in the language of doctrinal formulae.

## 5. Conclusion.

The Reports of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England have been the main subject of the current research. They are the work of different Doctrine Commissions, they deal with various topics and they are different in nature as well. The first Report being analysed, "Christian Believing", is to a considerable extent typical of the theological discourse in the 1970s: it is a collection of essays where a number of authors provide several points of view, none of which seems to be leading or more authoritative than the other. The stress is on doing theology in such a way, that the individual freedom to question and even to doubt is not violated. "The Remaking of Christian Doctrine" by M. Wiles gives a very clear example how far a theologian felt able to go in his speculations, and how blurred the doctrinal position might have been formulated.

"Believing in the Church" (1981) is still a compilation of essays, but the whole idiom gradually changed to a more positive stance: if one may compare this Report to a work of art or a piece of poetry, there is a common theme which underlines the diversity of opinions and positions present there, though often in an implicit way<sup>1</sup>. The Report acquires a new function of serving not merely as yet another theological enterprise, but as the expression of the common mind of those theologians who represented the position of the Church of England. This tendency was clearly followed in the publication of three more Reports: "We Believe in God" (1987), "We Believe in the Holy Spirit" (1991) and "The Mystery of Salvation" (1995). What makes those three reports significantly different from their predecessors is that they were published under the authority of the House of Bishops and were commended for the Church of England for study by the House.

As the contents and theological value of the Reports were depicted in detail in the main part of the thesis, it is appropriate now to turn to the issue of a more practical concern – the role that the Reports are designed to play in the Church of England. As the Reports are written by the Commission appointed by the House of Bishops, they have to be debated in the General Synod of the Church of England before they are published. The same procedure applies to many other important papers, those of a liturgical nature being included. The fact that the Reports went through the General

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<sup>1</sup> Debate on *Believing in the Church* in General Synod: February Group of Sessions 1982. *Report of Proceedings*, vol. 13, No 1 (London: CIO Publishing, 1982), 179-180.



Synod, were approved and commended by the House of Bishops provides them with a certain degree of authority in the Church of England. This authority cannot compete with the authority enjoyed by the Book of Common Prayer or the Canons, but it enables the Reports to fulfil the role they were designed to perform – to be the teaching of the Church of England. The role of the Doctrine Commission is seen to be ‘an expert consultative body which is there to give the best guidance it can to the bishops and to the whole Church of England on what can and should be said with integrity about the faith, and what cannot and should not’<sup>2</sup>.

Being the expression of the teaching of the Church of England, the Reports of the Doctrine Commission are commended for the use in the Church, but are not ‘required’ to be believed. The trend here is similar to one evident in the process of the liturgical revision: there is a strong attitude of reluctance to hand all the authority in formulating the matters of doctrine, or worship, over to a small group, even if it is a group of experts. Thus, during the debates on the “Common Worship” material the number of Eucharistic Prayers was largely defined by an agreement between the parties in the Church of England, and not by appealing to theological tradition (see Chapter 4). Similar to that, although the bishops are commonly seen as keepers of faith and teachers for the Church, the Reports were subject to public discussion in the General Synod, and not only in the House of Bishops.

It is interesting to note that the debates on the Reports in the General Synod has never been as heated as when the amendments to the liturgical services were discussed. The teaching role of the Reports is still to be evaluated and properly assessed in the Church of England. Although they contain a number of interesting and valuable insights, which are intellectually sharp and stimulating and also possible to apply to practice, the Reports are still at times seen as too ‘academic’.

This near prejudice against having Anglican systematic theology has resulted in the lack of one major theological enterprise which might have been a counterpart for Continental Reformed or Roman Catholic tradition. On a grassroots level, Anglican theology is presented as ‘simply’ Christian theology, but it is also still claimed that Anglicanism possesses its own particular ethos. This idea is certainly attractive, but the criticism can be made that this ‘ethos’ is often formulated too vaguely and it is not clear

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<sup>2</sup> Debate on *We Believe in God* in General Synod: July Group of Sessions 1987 at the University of York. *Report of the Proceedings*, vol. 18, No 2 (London: Church House Publishing, 1987), 548.

whether it should be based on a set of historical events or on certain theological presumptions.

This thesis has claimed that due to this particular feature of Anglicanism, where doctrine is dispersed in a number of documents, the question of the doctrinal position of the Church of England cannot be considered separately from its worship (see Chapter 4b). The Church believes not only in what it proclaims, but also in what it does and celebrates. Although the desirability of constructing one major theological structure for the Church of England may be questioned, great care should be taken to monitor how theology is expressed by means of the integrated system of worship the Church of England uses.

Now the liturgical life of the Church of England is evolving rapidly, being enriched from different sources, and the issue of worship and doctrine is once again at stake. If the worship can be defined as the self-expression of the Church, doctrinal theology may be seen as the self-identification of the Church, and the former does not properly exist without the latter. A shared theology is the firm basis for all other facets of the Church's life: prayer, mission, a vision of the Church, etc. The present research has argued that in the Church of England it is possible to speak about the recovery of the Trinitarian theology in recent decades. There is no coincidence that this recovery was accompanied by a new stronger emphasis on corporate consciousness and corporate activity in the Church of England, as the Church serves as a symbol of the activity and nature of God, who is Trinity.

The theme of the Trinitarian theology as it is expressed in the Church of England was largely deployed basing on the Reports of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England, especially in Chapter 3 (according to the objectives of the thesis, set forth in the Introduction). Due to the lack of space, a number of official church documents, which also reflect the tendency of grounding the doctrine of the church in the Trinity, are beyond the scope of my research<sup>3</sup>.

As a matter of conclusion, my last argument is that there is a pressing need for formulating Anglican theology in an explicit way, and this need is even greater when the Church of England is entering now the third millennium. This task itself inevitably

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<sup>3</sup> See, for instance, Chapter 2 'The Church in the purposes of the triune God' in *Eucharistic Presidency: A theological statement by the House of Bishops* GS 1248 (London: Church House Publishing, 1997); or 2.13-2.26, Virginia Report. The Report by the Inter-Anglican Theological and Doctrinal Commission in Rosenthal, James M., and Nicola Currie *Being Anglican in the third millennium. The official Report of the 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Anglican Consultative Council, Panama 1996* (London: Morehouse Publishing 1997), 238 – 241.

brings forth the issue who in the Church of England possesses the authority to define the 'explicit' theological status and what ecclesial authority such theology can bear. Both these questions need to be answered first, as they provide a meta-theological frame. The identity of the Church of England is not something to be taken for granted now, and it is to be recaptured and maintained. It is not possible to see the identity of the Church of England now in its liturgy only, as one common Prayer Book has given way to a vast variety of options to take. Although the Book of Common Prayer is still official and authoritative, there is no set pattern to follow any longer. Some alternative services (for instance, Nine O'Clock Service in Sheffield) have demonstrated that variety and a larger degree of permissiveness are not always a merit in itself. Variety is possible only when a common liturgical core is clearly present, otherwise there is a danger of chaotic development.

The ethos of the Church of England now cannot be deduced from the English culture, 'Englishness', either. What is known as 'Englishness' is mostly the culture of a relatively well-off white middle-class layer of society. England today is a country of many faiths, many languages and many cultures. The parish system is still here, but it would be a grave mistake to regard England as predominantly Church of England, or even Christian. The same situation is to be found elsewhere in the West when the leading values have shifted to consumerism, individualism and the post-modern lack of strict values itself.

The Church of England is facing now several tasks and challenges, and the response to them should be provided on theological grounds. These areas where theological clarity is needed are briefly listed as follows:

- The area of Anglican worship: maintaining the proper balance between the diversity of the options to follow and the specifically Anglican style and theology of worship. Now it is of primary importance as the worship is no longer seen as something which happens behind closed doors for a few 'initiates'; worship is part and parcel of Anglican heritage and may serve as an effective tool of outreach and educating newly baptised.
- Anglican ecclesiology: new ways of being the church and emerging church are a major challenge to traditional models of the church. The question "What is the Church?" is not an idle one – only a Church which is true to its nature can be biblical, theologically-based, growing and missionary.

- The area of the doctrine itself: such controversies as lay Eucharistic presidency, women bishops or practicing gay clergy may become a dividing factor if they are not properly theologically addressed and tackled.

- Ecumenism and the dialogue with other religions. Here probably the main challenge is the challenge of being the Church in a secular society. Mission and evangelisation are no longer seen as happening somewhere overseas, 'from West to the rest'. It is enough to mention that an ever growing number of evangelists and mission partners are working now in the UK, and not somewhere else. Another main issue is the dialogue with other Christian traditions where theological clarity is a must for achieving mutual understanding. And one of the most recent topics is growing in mutual respect and understanding with other world traditions (in the British context, especially Islam and Hinduism).

The Reports of the Doctrine Commission of the Church of England have blazed the trail for a sound and particularly Anglican theology, and all of them were published as a response to certain worrying trends or challenges. Three latest Reports, being the unanimous work of the Doctrine Commission, can serve as powerful tools of theological teaching in the Church of England, as their theology is of a high standard and at the same time fairly accessible for the reader. Unfortunately, the critics of the Church of England or those theologians, who drifted apart from the Christian orthodoxy, sometimes have gained a better publicity. It is still a future task for the Church of England to ensure that its teaching, although still open to creative questioning, is nevertheless orthodox, theologically clear and sound for all its adherents. The role of the Reports of the Doctrine Commission as teaching theological resources, commended by the House of Bishops for the Church of England, has already been recognized and appraised, both during the debates in the General Synod and in the official documents<sup>4</sup> issued by the Church of England.

The current research can be seen as an introduction to the doctrine and worship of the Church of England in the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and in its limitedness it indicates the ways for further studies in the matter. It would be a fascinating task to trace how theology of the Church of England is reflected in its praxis and to try to find a coherent answer to the question 'What do Anglicans believe in?' Although the possible value of this MA Thesis is that it might provide a formal or methodological basis for

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<sup>4</sup> See *An Anglican-Methodist Covenant* (London: Methodist Publishing House and Church House Publishing, 2001), 35.



such a research, the task itself far outstretches the format requested for an MA degree and my personal knowledge and competence.

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